A Day in the Life of Muhammad

A Study in the Prophet's Daily Programme

Abd al-Wahhab b. Nasir al-Turayri



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translated and edited by

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Dedication

To my brother in Islam, Abd al-Aziz ibn Muhammad al-Majid [may God bless his soul] who gave me the idea of this book and led me to its starting point. He was like a light shining in my life, or a breath of sweet fresh air. He passed away, but his memory remains forever.

To his son Usamah, and his daughters Amal, Sarah and Afaf. In their lives his may continue.

Our Lord, our meeting is but short in this present world. Give us a better one in our future life. By Your grace, settle us in an eternal brotherhood in heaven, the abode of permanent life.

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I pray to God to grant them an abundance of His grace.

Contents

Introduction

Here is the city of palm dates and lively hearts; here lives his heart. It is his place, his city, his people. It is the city in which everything came alight when he arrived. Its people and its very nature loved him. Here is Mount Uhud with which he had a relation of mutual love. These narrow alleyways will recognize his footsteps. Here will be his mosque and adjacent to it will be his small rooms. But here in the mosque will also gather a great band of men, eager to follow him and do his bidding. With them he will have a pure relation of mutual love. He is always with them; but his special relation is with God.

We will look at Prophet Muhammad's management of his day, hour by hour, to gain an insight into the simplicity of his great life, the spontaneity of his serious life, the perfect balance between his activities and the fulfillment of complementary needs.

We will see true vivacity in his life, as the lively hours follow one another in his day: every moment is full; no second is wasted. Deals with life itself were made at every second: in his home, mosque, the alleyways of Madinah, his companions' homes, on the hard mat where he sat, at meal times and in bed when he was about to sleep.

Those around him were all eyes, trying to monitor every word and every move. Even the dark night could not screen his action from those loving hearts who wanted to know how he spent the night. No walls were high enough to hide his private life. Both hearts and eyes were with him at home until he went to bed: they saw him as he was fast asleep and observed him as he woke up.

He was not just an ordinary person who started fresh in the morning and was tired and less energetic in the evening. The constant flow of his energy made you feel that every moment was a fresh start. He was the man of the moment; every moment. No opportunity was ever lost. As a Prophet and a messenger of God, he instinctively realized that every moment must be accounted for; must serve a useful purpose. The same rule applies to every hour and every day: each must have its achievement. Life can thus yield its fruits.

In the following pages we shall live with God's messenger, morning and evening. We shall walk with him in the streets of Madinah, share his humble food, listen to his loving voice as he teaches his companions, and also listen to him, full of humility, as he prays. We shall sit with him on his humble mat and share his little food which he was always ready to give to others.

You can go into his home, guided by the description of his companions. You can see him asleep, in perfect tranquillity, and awake in full activity. You may see a young infant on his lap, or a little child on his shoulder, feeling the warmth and blessing of being close to him.

It is right to ask: how did this great man, this noble Prophet, apply his human nature to his role as God's messenger? How did he deal with the daily cycle of life? How did he spend his day?

Let us together discover how this man: Prophet, God's messenger, leader, father, husband and friend, spent his days. This is what we shall attempt in this book: A Day in Muhammad's Life.

Abd al-Wahhab ibn Nasir al-Turayri

Makkah

Friday, 20/7/1431

At the Break of Dawn

The very early light of dawn penetrates through the darkness of the night. At the same time, Bilal's voice shatters the silence of the night in Madinah as he makes the call for prayer, the *adhan*. God's messenger (peace be upon him) is at that moment asleep, taking a little rest at dawn after having spent much of the night standing up in voluntary night prayer.

When Bilal makes his call for prayer, the Prophet wakes up. The first thing he does is to reach for his tooth stick, *miswak*, and brush his teeth. He then says: "All praise be to God who has given us life after we have been lifeless.[1] To Him all shall return." He then responds to the call to the prayer, repeating what the caller says. When the caller says "*Allah akbar; Allah akbar*", i.e. "God is Supreme; God is Supreme;" the Prophet says "*Allah akbar; Allah akbar*". When the caller says: "*Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah*", i.e. "I bear witness that there is no deity other than God", the Prophet repeats it preceded by the word "*wa ana*", which means "I too bear such witness". The caller then says: "*Ashhadu anna Muhammad Rasul Allah*", i.e. "I bear witness that Muhammad is God's messenger", and the Prophet repeats it preceded by "I too". The caller then urges people saying: "*Hayi `ala Salah; Hayi `alal-Falah*", i.e. "Come to prayers; come to success". After each one of these, the Prophet says: "All power acts only with God's permission". The final phrases of the *adhan* repeat that God is supreme and reassert His oneness. The Prophet repeats these as the caller says them.

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[1] In his advocacy of the Islamic message, Prophet Muhammad likened death to sleep. He is quoted to have said to his people: "By God, you shall die, just like you sleep; and you shall be resurrected, just like you wake up." The Qur'an also suggests a strong similarity between death and sleep. It says: "God takes away people's souls upon their death, and the souls of the living during their sleep. He keeps with Him the souls of those whose death He has ordained and sends back the others until their appointed time. In all this there are signs for people who reflect." (39: 42)

The Prophet then adds this supplication: "My Lord, the Lord of this perfect call and due prayer, grant Muhammad the means and that which is best, and raise him to the honourable station You have promised him."

The Prophet then rises. If he needs a bath, he takes one, and if he needs only the ablution, i.e. *wudu'*, he performs it. At times, he may proceed to prayer without performing the ablution. Someone may ask him whether that is right. His answer is: "Only my eyes sleep, but my mind remains alert."

He then offers the two recommended *rak`ahs*[2] of Fajr. He was never as quick to offer voluntary prayers as in the case of the Fajr prayer. He offers two short *rak`ahs*. They were so short that one may wonder whether he completed the reading of the first surah, *al-Fatihah*, which is obligatory to read in every *rak`ah* of Islamic prayer. In the first of these two recommended *rak`ahs* he normally read Surah 109: "Say: 'Unbelievers! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship. I shall never worship what you worship, nor will you ever worship what I worship. You have your own religion and I have mine." (109: 1-6) In the second, he normally read Surah 112: "Say: He is God, the One and only God, the Eternal, the Absolute. He begets none, nor is He begotten, and there is nothing that could be compared to Him." (112: 1-4) On occasions he read in the first of these two *rak`ahs* the verse that says: "Say `all of you]: We believe in God and in what has been revealed to us, and in what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and in what all prophets have been given by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to God we have surrendered ourselves." (2: 136) Or he may read: "Say: People of earlier revelations. Let us come to an agreement which is equitable between you and us: that we shall worship none but God, that we shall associate no partners with Him, and that we shall not take one another for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear

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2 *Rak`ah* is the unit of Islamic prayers, both obligatory and voluntary. Thus, a prayer consists of 2, 3 or 4 *rak`ahs*. Each *rak`ah* starts in the position of standing up when the worshipper is reading from the Qur'an. It also includes a *ruku`*, which means bowing, and two prostrations with a short sitting in between. In all these the worshipper is glorifying God and praising Him.

witness that we have surrendered ourselves to God." (3: 64) Or: "When Jesus became conscious of their rejection of the faith, he asked: "Who will be my helpers in the cause of God?" The disciples replied: "We are `your] helpers in God's cause. We believe in God. Bear you witness that we have surrendered ourselves to Him. Our Lord, we believe in what You have bestowed from on high, and we follow the messenger, so write us down among those who bear witness `to the truth]." (3: 52-53) He was always most keen and most regular in offering these two voluntary *rak`ahs* before the obligatory Fajr, or dawn, prayer. He used to say: "These two *rak`ahs* are more precious to me than the whole world and all it contains."

If he finds his wife awake after having finished these two *rak`ahs*, he would talk to her in a friendly and loving way. How happy a wife is when she starts her day with a loving conversation with her husband. If she is still asleep, he would recline on his right side until it is time for the obligatory prayer.

When Bilal felt that people had assembled in the mosque, he would approach the Prophet's rooms and call out: "Time for prayer, messenger of God" The Prophet would then proceed to offer the prayer. When he came out of his home, he would look up to the sky and say: "In the name of God. I place my trust in God. My Lord, I appeal for your protection so that I may neither go astray nor be led astray; that I may neither err nor be made to err; that I may neither wrong anyone nor suffer any wrongdoing; and that I may neither behave in ignorance nor suffer ignorant behaviour." When he entered the mosque, he would say: "In the name of God. Peace be to God's messenger. My Lord, forgive me my sins and open for me the gates of Your grace. I seek shelter with God, the Supreme, His noble face and eternal power, against Satan, the accursed."

When Bilal saw the Prophet entering the mosque, he would make the call to start the prayer; i.e. the *iqamah*, and when the Prophet's companions saw him coming, they would rise for the prayer and stand in straight rows.

He might come out with his head dripping of water, as he would have just taken a bath. On the odd occasion, he might come out, then the congregational prayer was called and the worshippers stood in their rows and he stood in his place to lead the prayer. He

then remembered that he was in the state of ceremonial impurity.[3] He signalled with his hand to his companions and said to them: "Stay in your position". He then went back home, took a quick bath and came out with water dripping off his head. The Prophet did not conceal such matters or feel embarrassed about them. He was just an ordinary human being whose life reflected all normal aspects of human life. Just like the Qur'an says in reference to the type of messenger God sends to people: "Even if We had appointed an angel as Our messenger, We would certainly have made him `appear as] a man." (6: 9)

When the Prophet stood in his position to lead the prayer, he would ensure that the rows of worshippers behind him were straight. He would say to them: "Make your lines straight and stand close to each other. Straightening lines is part of the perfection of prayers." He then started the prayer saying "*Allah-u akbar*," which means "God is Supreme". As he said it, he raised his two hands so as to be parallel with his shoulders and then he put his right hand over his left hand. He then said without raising his voice: "My Lord, keep me as far from sin as the east from the west. My Lord, wash off my sins just like stains are washed off a white robe. My Lord, wash sin off me with snow, water and hale."

Having said this supplication silently, the Prophet then read aloud the first surah of the Qur'an, *al-Fatihah*, which is required to be read in every *rak`ah*. He read it very clearly, pausing at the end of every one of its short verses. He thus read *al-hamdu lillahi rabbil-`alamin*, "i.e. praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds", and paused; *Al-Rahmani al-Rahim* "i.e. the Lord of Grace, the Ever-Merciful", pause; *Maliki yawmi-ddin* "i.e. Master of the Day of Judgement", pause, etc. In his recitation, he elongated vowels, thus made the second 'a' of *Al-Rahman* and the 'i' of *al-Rahim* longer than their equivalents. After that he read a passage of the Qur'an, choosing a long passage in the first *rak`ah* and a shorter one in the second. In the two *rak`ahs* together, he read between 60 and 100

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[3] The 'state of ceremonial impurity', i.e. *janabah*, refers to a state when a person cannot offer prayers until having taken a bath that ensures washing all one's body with water. This is called the grand ablution, or *ghusl*. A man is in the state of ceremonial impurity after ejaculation that arises from sexual excitement as in an intercourse, masturbation or a wet dream. A woman is in this state during menstruation or after sexual intercourse.

verses. This is in line with the Qur'anic instruction regarding the recitation of the Qur'an in the dawn prayer, i.e. Fajr: "Keep up prayer when the sun is on its decline, in the darkness of the night, and recite the Qur'an at dawn, for the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn is indeed witnessed." (17: 78) On Fridays, he usually read Surah 32 in the first *rak`ah* and Surah 76 in the second.

Sometimes, he would add after rising from *ruku`* `i.e. bowing] in the second *rak`ah* a supplication, particularly if some hardship or calamity had befallen the Muslim community. He prayed to God to remove that hardship and to grant comfort and victory to the Muslim community. The poet `Abdullah ibn Rawahah, an Ansari companion of the Prophet, described this scene as follows:

> Among us is God's messenger: as a bright light penetrates through the darkness at dawn, he would be reciting God's book.

When he completed his prayer and finished, he would say while still seated in his place, facing the *qiblah* `i.e. the direction to the Ka`bah in Makkah]: "I seek God's forgiveness `repeating it three times]. My Lord, You are peace, and peace comes from You. Blessed You are, the Lord of majesty and benevolence". He then turned to his right, or might at times turn to his left. When he faced his companions, the first thing they would hear him say was: "My Lord, spare me Your punishment on the day when You resurrect Your servants."

He would then start his glorification of God, saying: "There is no deity other than God, the One who has no partners. To Him belong all dominion and all praise. He is able to accomplish everything. No power operates except by God's will. There is no deity other than God, and we worship none but Him. It is He who bestows all bounty and all grace comes from Him. To Him belong all goodly thanks. There is no deity other than God. We submit to Him only, even though the unbelievers dislike that. Our Lord, none can stop what You grant, and none can grant what You withhold. No endeavour is of use to anyone against You." He then glorifies God in the usual forms: *subhan Allah* `i.e. limitless is God in His

glory], *alhamd lillah* `i.e. all praise be to God], and *Allah akbar* `i.e. God is Supreme].

The Prophet would then say the main supplications he allocated for the morning. These include: "As we start this morning, all dominion belong to God. All praise be to Him. There is no deity other than God, the One who has no partners.[4] To him belong all dominion and all praise. He is able to accomplish everything. My Lord, I appeal to You to grant me of the goodness of this day and the goodness of what it encompasses, and the goodness of what follows it. I seek shelter with You against the evil of this day and what follows it. I seek refuge with You against laziness and miserable conditions in old age. Protect me against torment in hell and torment in the grave." He repeated these phrases in the evenings, substituting the reference to the morning by a reference to the evening.

"My Lord, I pray to You to grant me wellbeing in this life and in the life to come. Grant me Your pardon and safety in my faith, life, family and property. Give me shelter to cover my flaws and security to calm my fears. Protect me from the front, back, right, left and above. I appeal to Your greatness that no danger should engulf me from beneath me." He did not omit to say this supplication in the morning and evening.

His further supplication included the following: "My Lord, grant me good health in my body; in my hearing; in my sight. There is no deity other than You. My Lord, I seek Your shelter against disbelief and against poverty; I seek Your shelter against the torment in the grave. There is no deity other than You." He repeated these phrases three times morning and evening.

During this time, servants from all over Madinah would come to the Prophet carrying water containers. They want to have the Prophet's blessings of their water, requesting him to dip his hand in their water. He put his hand in every container presented to him.

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4 It should be noted that the emphasis on God's oneness is very strong in the Prophet's supplications and glorifications of God. God's oneness is the central Islamic belief. Hence, it is stated very often. By repeating it so often a Muslim remains always aware of the type of relation he or she has with God.

They may do this on a very cold morning, and he still put his hand in their vessels.

What a pleasant sight this is: the Prophet with his beaming face looking at these little hands, pure in their childhood, yet requesting the blessing of his hand. Their loving families looked on from a distance, delighted with what they saw. We can almost see them as they approached the Prophet who put his hand in their containers and planted love in their hearts. Happy were those faces that started their day with a glance at the Prophet's beaming face.

In the Morning with the Prophet

When the Prophet and his companions have completed their prayers and said their glorifications, the ends of their rows move closer. The Prophet looks all around at his companions while still seated at the spot where he has offered his prayers. As he is facing them, the morning light reveals the brightness of his face. He had a beaming white face, as if the sun was reflected in his face. Anyone looking at him saw truth in his face, just like `Abdullah ibn Sallam said: "When I examined his face, I realized that his was not the face of a liar."

He might start with an admonition, as reported by al-`Irbad ibn Sariyah: "One day after the Fajr prayer, the Prophet gave us a passionate admonition that caused tears to spring to people's eyes who felt very apprehensive. One person said: "Messenger of God, this sounds like the admonition of someone bidding farewell. What would you urge us to do?" He said: "I urge you to remain God-fearing, and to listen and obey even if your leader is a black slave. Those of you who live long shall see much controversy. Beware of deviant things, as they lead astray. Whoever of you lives till then should stick to my way [i.e. Sunnah] and the way followed by my rightly-guided successors. Hold on tight to it." The Prophet's admonition was not very frequent. He made it only sparingly, so that they would not get bored.

When his companions were gathered around him, he might turn to them and ask: "Is there anyone ill so that I would go and visit him?" If their answer was in the negative, he might ask: "Is there any funeral I might attend?"

He might enquire about anyone he missed. A black woman used to clean the mosque. The Prophet missed her one day and enquired about her. He was told that she died. He remonstrated with them, saying: "Why did you not inform me?" It appears that they thought she was of little concern. They said: "Messenger of God, she died at night and was buried. We did not wish to wake you up." The Prophet asked them to indicate her grave, and he went to her grave, offered the prayer for the deceased, praying for her.

One day, the Prophet noticed that his companion Thabit ibn Qays ibn Shammas was missing. He asked: "Why have not we seen Thabit ibn Qays? Is he ill?" Sa`d ibn Mu`adh said: "He is my neighbour and I have not heard anything about him being ill. Sa`d went to see him and he found him at home, having closed his door and sat there weeping. He asked him what was the matter? Thabit said: "It is too bad for me. God says: 'Believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak loudly to him as you would speak loudly to one another, lest all your deeds should come to nothing without your perceiving it.' (49: 2) I am a man with loud voice. I fear that all my work is undone and I would be destined to hell. On learning this, the Prophet said to Thabit: "You are not one of them. You shall live well and die well. You belong to the people of heaven."

We thus see how he used to enquire about his companions, forgetting none of them. Indeed they all had their special positions. Whoever attended received his share of welcome and care. Those who were absent were not forgotten. Enquiries were made to confirm that they were well. Needless to say, this is extremely important in strengthening social ties and consolidating the feeling of belonging to the community.

In this early morning session, the Prophet might ask his companions about their dreams. He would say: "Anyone who saw a dream may wish to relate to me, and I will interpret it for him." They related their dreams, and he interpreted them or said to his companions whatever was of benefit. One example of this is reported by `Abdullah ibn Sallam: "I saw a dream during the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In my dream I saw myself in a very spacious and splendid garden, with an iron pillar in the middle of it. The pillar went deep into the earth and reached up to the sky. At the top of the pillar there was a loop at the top. I was told to climb up the pillar. I said: 'I cannot'. A servant came forward and he lifted the back of my robes. I climbed up to the top and took hold of the loop. I was told to hold tight to it. I then woke up, feeling as if the loop is in my hand. I related this dream to the Prophet. He said to me: 'That garden is Islam, and the pillar is the main pillar of Islam. The loop represents a most firm support. It means that you will hold on to Islam until you die.'"

A former Jewish rabbi who embraced Islam soon after the Prophet's arrival in Madinah, `Abdullah ibn Sallam lived 35 years after the Prophet had passed away. During these years certain groups of people turned away from Islam and fought the Muslim state in what is known as 'the wars against the apostates'. `Abdullah ibn Sallam remained firm, holding on to the bond of Islam, as the Prophet told him he would do. He remained so until his death. The Prophet's interpretation of his dream may implicitly suggest that a wave of apostasy would take place, but `Abdullah would not join those apostates. This may be taken as a sign confirming his status as a prophet.

One day the Prophet asked his companions to relate to him their dreams, if any, so that he would interpret them. One man said: "Messenger of God, I saw tonight a cloud raining clarified butter and honey. There were people trying to catch with their hands what it rained. Some took much and some took little. I saw also a rope rising from the earth to the sky. I saw you holding on to it and climbing up high. Then a man holds it after you and climbs high, then another man holds on to it and climbs high. A third man then takes it but it breaks. It is then retied for him and he climbs up."

Abu Bakr said: "Messenger of God, please let me interpret it." The Prophet told him to go ahead. Abu Bakr said: "The cloud is Islam and the shade it gives its people. The butter and honey it rained is the Qur'an, as it is both sweet and rich. As for what people gather of it, there are people who learn much of the Qur'an and others who learn little of it. The rope that stretches from the earth to the sky is the truth that you are advocating. God will raise your status by that truth. After you one man will stick to it and he rises high, and another man does the same. Then a third man will take it up but it breaks, before it is retied and the man will rise higher. Please, messenger of God, tell me whether I am right in interpreting it or not." The Prophet said: "You are right in some aspects and wrong in others." Abu Bakr said: "By God, let me know where I was wrong." The Prophet said to him: "Do not say an oath."

It should be noted that the dreams the Prophet's companions related to him were relevant to their main preoccupation and the matter that concerned them most, namely, their faith. Their lives were focused on their faith, they strove for it during the day and

took it to bed. Thus, it was reflected in their dreams. We may wonder much about the Prophet's companions: how close to him and concerned about him they were. Indeed their preoccupation with him was extended from their wakeful hours to their sleeping time and their dreams.

At times, the Prophet might relate to them a dream he saw before adding how it should be interpreted. Samurah reports that the Prophet "asked us one day if any of us saw a dream. We answered in the negative. He said: 'Last night I saw two men coming towards me, then they took me by the hand to the holy land...'" The *hadith* then mentions the dream at length, including some of the conditions of people deserving God's punishment and the causes of their punishment. The *hadith* also includes some aspects of the hereafter.

The session included some conversation between the Prophet's companions, and he took part in their discussion or listened to what they said. They might speak about their pre-Islamic days and their practices that smacked of total ignorance, and how they subsequently realized the fallacy such practices involved. They spoke about the enlightenment Islam gave them. As they spoke about these, they might laugh at their own past ignorance. The Prophet might smile, for he, generally speaking, would only smile in most cases. The Prophet normally stayed in the mosque until the sun had risen and was fully resplendent.

The Prophet then proceeded to his wives' rooms. When he went out of the mosque, he would say: "In God's name. All peace and blessing may be granted to God's messenger. My Lord, forgive me my sins and open to me the gates of Your grace." The first thing he did as he entered his home was to brush his teeth, so as to clean his pleasant mouth. He would greet his family, saying: "Assalamu `alaykum; Peace be to you. How are you, members of this household?" He would visit everyone of his wives in her room, greeting them all and praying for them, without staying long with any of them. He might even enter the room of any of them only to find her in her place of prayers, and he would leave her to continue. It is reported that he once entered Juwayriyyah's room and found her at her place of worship, glorifying God. He went out again, leaving her to continue whatever worship she was engaged in.

Sometimes he might want to eat, and he would simply ask: "Do you have anything?" If they had any, they would bring it to him. In most cases, it would be very simple and light food, such as dates, dried milk or *hays*;[5] or it might be only a drink of milk or some brew.[6] If they had nothing, he would say: "Then I am fasting today."

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[5] This is a mixture of dates, dried milk and clarified butter which the Arabs used to make, particularly to take with them when they travelled, as it was easy to make and would keep for several days.

[6] The Arabs used to make drinks of dates, raisins or honey by putting these in water and leaving them for a day or more. Such drinks are permissible unless they turn into wine when they become forbidden

Back in the Mosque

When the Prophet had visited all his wives, he would go back to the mosque. When he entered, he would offer a short prayer as greeting to the mosque. He normally offered this prayer near a pillar called the al-Muhajirin Pillar,[7] which is in the middle of the blessed area, al-Rawdah. The Prophet often chose that spot to offer his voluntary prayers.

He would then sit in the mosque, at al-Rawdah, with his back to `A'ishah's room. His companions would gather around him. This meeting was a regular one, known to all so that anyone who wanted something from the Prophet could come and see him then at the mosque. There may be a small or large number of his companions with him, according to the circumstances of each one of them. If there was only a small number, then they would form a circle around him. If there were many, they would sit in two rows to his right and left, so that any newcomer could come up to him, and anyone who had a question could draw nearer to him.

When he sat with his companions, the Prophet would talk to them. He was the most eloquent of people. Everyone loved to listen to him, as his delivery was fine. He spoke neither too fast nor too slow, choosing to pronounce his words clearly; so that if anyone wanted to count the number of words he uttered, he would find no difficulty. `A'ishah said: "God's messenger did not speak at length as you do. He spoke very clearly so that anyone who sat to listen to him could memorize what he said."

He often resorted to dialogue, starting with a question. He might pose a question so as to raise their interest in finding out the answer, as when he said: "Shall I tell you which is the gravest of cardinal sins?" They said: "Please do, messenger of God." He said: "To associate partners with God, to be undutiful to parents and perjury." He might put a question in order to draw their attention

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[7] Al-Muhajirin is the name given to the Prophet's companions who immigrated to Madinah with him and settled there. Al-Rawdah, means 'the garden'. In this context it refers to a small area in the middle of the original Prophet's mosque, between his home and the pulpit where he gave his Friday speeches. Every visitor to the Prophet's mosque is keen to offer prayers there because the Prophet described it as a garden in heaven.

to a more important meaning that might first spring to mind. One example was when he asked: "Do you know who is a bankrupt?" They said: "A bankrupt is a person who has no money or property." He said: "A bankrupt in my community is someone who on the Day of Judgement finds himself with a good record of prayers, fasting, zakat and charity, but during his life on earth he also abused this person, slandered another, unlawfully took money from a third, and might have killed someone and beaten another. He is made to give each one some of his good deeds in compensation. If his good deeds are exhausted before he could pay off what is due to them, some of their sins are taken away from them and recorded against him. Ultimately, he is thrown in hell."

The Prophet might at times put a question so that they would think hard about the answer. One day, having received a pot of the mushy stuff found inside the date tree, the Prophet said to those with him: "Tell me which is the tree that is similar to a Muslim: it does not drop its leaves and it gives fruit at all times." They mentioned various types of trees that grew in different places, but every time they mentioned a tree he told them that it was not. `Abdullah ibn `Umar, who was the youngest of the Prophet's ten companions present thought it was the date tree, but he looked at the people around him who included Abu Bakr and his own father. He stopped short of speaking out. Then the Prophet said that it was the date tree.

He might repeat some of what he said three times, so as to ensure that it was understood, or to stress its importance. He might even repeat it more often to add to its importance. This took place, for example, when he enumerated cardinal sins, adding "And also a deliberate falsehood and perjury." He continued to repeat these words until people wished him to stop, feeling how seriously he condemned it.

The Prophet might at times put a question out of a sudden to his companions in order to end up with an unexpected conclusion. For example, he once asked them: "Who of you is fasting today?" They were totally unprepared for such a question. Had they known that he might ask them, they all would have fasted that day. Hence, they kept quiet, except Abu Bakr who said that he was fasting. The Prophet asked: "Who of you visited an ill person today?" Again

only Abu Bakr said that he did. The Prophet put another question: "Who of you took part in a funeral?" All remained silent except Abu Bakr who confirmed that he did. The Prophet asked: "Who today fed a needy person?" All present remained silent except Abu Bakr who said that he did. The Prophet then said: "If a person combines all four in one day, he would surely be in heaven."

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) might sometimes use aids to illustrate his meaning, as he did once when he talked about the disappearance of trust.[8] He said: "A man may go to sleep and the trust is removed from his heart, leaving only a trace like that of burnt skin. He may again go to sleep and the trust is removed from his heart, leaving a trace like that of manual work.[9] Yet it is like a brand of fire that is rolled over your leg and burns it.[10] You see its effect, but there is no substance to it." He then took a pebble and rolled it over his foot.

At times he might use a drawing to illustrate his meaning. He once drew a square, with a horizontal line in the middle of it, going through one line to extend beyond the square. He added short lines perpendicular to the line in the middle. He then asked his companions: "Do you know what this is?" They said: "God and His messenger know better." He said: "This horizontal line in the middle represents man, and these short lines around it are the adversities that occur to him. They come at him from all sides. If this one misses him, the other will attack him. This square is the end of his life which will eventually catch up with him. This line that goes beyond the square is his hope. He hopes for things that go beyond his life while death will come sooner."

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[8] In the following *hadith* 'trust' refers to faith itself, as it is what God has entrusted to man. This is referred to in the Qur'an: "We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid to receive it. Yet man took it up." (33: 72) The *hadith* speaks about the weakening of faith in someone's heart as a result of his actions as he goes about his business. The Prophet expresses this metaphorically as going to sleep.

[9] The Prophet refers here to the effect of hard manual work, like using an axe to break something hard. It takes a long time to disappear.

[10] This is a reference to the result of skin burning which leaves bubbles full of fluid.

This was a session of education and admonition, but the teaching and the admonition was not given as a one-sided lecture. The Prophet was keen on using dialogue so that the learners could take part in the process. It was an interactive dialogue that aimed to intellectually enrich the learners.

An important feature of this session was the frequent prayer for forgiveness. The Prophet's companions noted that the Prophet was always declaring his repentance and seeking God's forgiveness. They might count to 100 the number of times he said this prayer in one session: "My Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance. You alone are the One who accepts repentance and forgive all."

Young children were brought to him while he was in his morning session at the mosque. He would pray for them and take a date that he might soften in his mouth and rub with it their gum and teeth, so that they would have a little of his blessed saliva. He might give them names and bless them.

One case of this was that Abu Usayd Malik ibn Rabi`ah al-Sa`idi brought his newborn son, al-Mundhir, to the Prophet. The Prophet placed the child on his thigh while the father was sitting near. The Prophet then was preoccupied with something he was attending to. Abu Usayd gave instructions and someone from his family took the child away and returned him home. The Prophet was then alerted. He asked: "Where is the child?" Abu Usayd said: "Messenger of God, we sent him home." The Prophet asked about his name. The father mentioned it, but the Prophet said: "No. Do not give him this name. Call him al-Mundhir." Abu Usayd complied and called him al-Mundhir.

The Prophet might be also brought the early fruit of the date trees, as dates were the main fruit of Madinah and its people's staple diet. They were pleased when they saw the first fruits starting to ripen, and they brought it to the Prophet. When he took it, he would say this supplication: "Our Lord, bless our fruits for us, and bless this our city; bless for us our small measure and bless our large measure: one blessing over another. My Lord, Abraham was Your servant, friend and prophet, and I am Your servant and prophet. He prayed You for Makkah and I pray You for Madinah in the same terms as he prayed You for Makkah and double that." He would then call the youngest child present and give it that fruit.

A pleasant joke might be said at such times. The fact that the Prophet was serious and that people held him in awe did not stop his companions from spontaneous behaviour or comments. One day the Prophet was talking to his companions and a Bedouin was present. The Prophet said: "A man in heaven sought God's permission to plant. God asked him: 'Are you not given all that you wish for?' The man said: 'Yes, my Lord, but I like farming.' He planted his seeds and within the blink of an eye his plants grew fully and were ready to harvest.[11] The plants were huge like mountains. God said: 'Here is what you, son of Adam, wanted. Nothing satisfies you.'" When the Prophet completed his narrative, the Bedouin said: "Messenger of God, By God this man must have been from the Quraysh or the Ansar. They are the one who like farming. As for us, Bedouins, we have nothing to do with it." Everyone laughed as did the Prophet.

It appears that this session was the one when the Prophet received visiting delegations. Travellers normally stayed the night outside Madinah and entered the city in the morning when he was having his morning session with his companions. One such delegation was the one who came from Mudar. They were brought to the Prophet near midday and he immediately saw that they were in desperate poverty. His face looked gloomy as he saw their conditions. After he offered the midday prayer, i.e. Zuhr, with the congregation, he spoke to the people and urged them to give charitable donations. Soon he had two heaps of clothes and food to give away. Another delegation was that of the tribe of `Abd al-Qays who came from Alhasa in eastern Arabia. The Prophet welcomed them, saying: "Welcome to the people of this delegation: you shall be neither humiliated nor in regret."

Most probably it was in such a session that the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet in the form of 'a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black. No sign of travelling was to be seen on him and none of those present knew

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[11] The Prophet is speaking here about an event in heaven. That process of farming is completed in the blink of an eye presents no difficulty to God Almighty.

him.' He asked the Prophet about Islam, *iman* [i.e. faith], *ihsan*[12] and the signs of the approach of the Last Hour.

Likewise, it was most probably in such a session that Dimam ibn Tha`labah came to see the Prophet. He sat his camel in the mosque and asked those present: "Who of you is Ibn `Abd al-Muttalib?" The Prophet answered him: "I am here." The man said: "I am putting questions to you and I will be hard. Do not take it too hard." The Prophet said: "You may put whatever questions you have". The man said: "I ask you by God, your Lord and the Lord of all who were before you: has God sent you as His messenger to all mankind?" The Prophet said: "By God, He has." The man then asked the Prophet about the major duties of Islam and the Prophet answered him. The man then said: "By Him who has sent you with the message of truth, I shall neither add to these nor omit any." When the man left, the Prophet said: "This man has learnt well. He will be in heaven if he is true to his word."

This regular session served as a consultative counsel for the Muslim community when they discussed major events. Here the consultation took place before a decision was taken to face the attacking army of unbelievers in the Battle of Uhud. Here the decision was taken to dig the moat to defend Madinah against the combined forces of the unbelievers and the Jews. Other major matters were discussed here, because no leader consulted his companions as the Prophet did. He did so in compliance with God's order: "Consult with them in the conduct of public affairs." (3: 159)

The Prophet's companions took turns in attending this regular meeting. This is mentioned by `Umar ibn al-Khattab who reports: "I had an Ansari neighbour in the high areas of Madinah. We took turns in going down to attend God's messenger, (peace be upon him): he went down one day and I went down the next day. If I went down I told him all that took place on that day, including whatever was revealed of the Qur'an. If he went down, he would do the same."

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[12] It is difficult to render the meaning of *ihsan* in one or two words. Linguistically speaking, it means 'right action, goodness, charity, sincerity, etc.' Its root also means 'to master something or be proficient at it'.

The Prophet used to sit with his companions in these meetings as one of them. He had no sign to distinguish him. A stranger might come in and he would not know who the Prophet was. He would probably ask who Muhammad was. They could not point out anything to distinguish him other than his bright face. They would say: "He is the one with the white face, reclining there." The Prophet's companions later suggested to him that they should make him a low bench of mud so that a stranger coming in will know him. He agreed. This was, however, towards the end of his blessed life, in year 9 AH, which is known as 'the year of delegations'.

The Prophet used to divide his smiles and attention equally among his companions. When they dispersed, each one would think that he was the Prophet's favourite companion.

Sometimes, food was presented to the Prophet when he was with his companions. They would all share it. Samurah ibn Jundub reports: "We were once with the Prophet when a tray of *tharid*[13] was brought to him. He ate of it as did those present. The people continued to eat, group after group, until it was nearly midday." A man asked him whether the food in the tray was being replenished. He answered: "Not from the earth. Whatever replenishment there was came only from heaven."

Once a sheep was given to him as a gift, at a time when food was scarce in Madinah. He said to his family: "Prepare this sheep, take this bread, cut it in small pieces and make *tharid* with it." The Prophet had a large tray called al-Gharra' which needed to be carried by four men. In the morning when the Prophet and his companions offered the voluntary prayer of midmorning, the tray was brought to him. The people gathered around it. They were too many, so the Prophet sat close. A Bedouin asked disapprovingly: "What way to sit?" The Prophet said: "God Almighty has made me a hospitable servant of His. He has not made me a stubborn dictator. Eat of the lower parts and leave the top so that it would be blessed." He then added: "Take of it and eat. By Him who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, the lands of Persia and Byzantium

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[13] *Tharid* was the main dish the Arabs used to cook. Its main ingredients were bread and meat.

would fall to you. Your food will be so plentiful that people would eat[14] without mentioning God's name."

This session might be long or short, as the situation might require or the circumstances dictate. When it was late morning, the Prophet would rise. Whenever he finished this meeting with his companions, he would conclude by saying: "My Lord, limitless You are in Your glory, and all praise belongs to You. I bear witness that there is no deity other than You. I pray for Your forgiveness and I repent of all sin." Some people said to him: "We did not previously hear you saying these words." He said: "These words ensure the forgiveness of any faults that might have taken place in the meeting." His wife, `A'ishah asked him: "Messenger of God, I note that you say these words to conclude your meetings, recitation of the Qur'an and your prayers. Why?" He said: "For a person who has said something good, these words would be a stamp of his character till the Day of Judgement, and for someone who said something bad, they would offset his bad words."

The Prophet rarely left a meeting with his companions without saying these prayers: "Our Lord, grant us the quality of fearing You so as to stop us from disobeying You. Grant us such obedience to You as to take us to Your heaven, and enough faith to lighten life misfortunes. Our Lord, preserve for us our hearing, sight and strength throughout our life and make these the last of us. Let our grievance be only against those who are unjust to us, and grant us victory over those who are hostile to us. Let not any calamity that befalls us be in our faith. Let not this world be our main concern or the limit of our knowledge. Do not give power over us to one who has no mercy." The Prophet's companions then dispersed. They either went to attend their business or went home for a short nap before midday.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) either went home for a short nap, or walked in the streets of Madinah, may be to respond to an invitation or to visit someone, or to attend to something.

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[14] It is a confirmed sunnah that before we start eating we say, *In the name of God.* A short prayer to bless our food may also be added.

In the Streets of Madinah

The Prophet's walk was marked by strength and purpose. There was nothing in his walk like the affected airs that we often see public figures put on. As he walked, he lifted his legs as if he was pulling them off the ground, and proceeded forward as though he was walking down a slope. Whoever saw him realized that he was neither weak nor lazy. When he turned, he turned with all his body. His companions walked either ahead or around him, but never behind him. No two men ever stepped over his heels.

This was a mark of his humility. He never walked ahead of his companions, leaving them to follow him as done by many leaders. He did not accept that his companions should look humble or trailing him. He simply walked with and among them.

When he walked, he might use a stick or a date branch. He might also hold a small stick or one with a semi-circular top. This was a custom of the Arabs, because such tools were often needed in their community.

The Prophet might be met by a maid servant and she would take him by the hand. He would go with her wherever she wanted so as to help her with whatever she needed. He might go with her on her errands, without taking his hand off her hand until she went back.

The Prophet smiled whenever he met anyone. Jarir ibn `Abdullah said: "Whenever God's messenger met me he would smile to me."

His was a radiant, welcoming smile, giving the person meeting him a feeling that it was special for him. Jarir appears to have thought that the Prophet did that especially for him and he was keen to report it in appreciation. In fact the Prophet did that with all people. `Abdullah ibn al-Harith ibn Jaz' says: "I never saw anyone who smiled more often than God's messenger (peace be upon him)."

If during his walk the Prophet met some boys, he would greet them and wipe their faces with his hand. Jabir ibn Samurah reports: "The Prophet went out one day and I was with him. Some boys

met him and he wiped the cheeks of each one of them. He also wiped my cheek and I noticed that his hand was cold and smelled fine, as if he had just taken it out of a basket of perfumes.[15] My cheek that the Prophet wiped remained better than my other cheek."

The Prophet used to visit the Ansar in their quarters. Boys of the Ansar might come to him and walk around him. He would pray for them, rub their heads and greet them.

One day he passed by the quarters of al-Najjar clan. Maids of the Ansar received him, playing on their tambourines and singing:

We are the maids of the al-Najjar;
Muhammad is the best of neighbours.

The Prophet said to them: "God knows that my heart loves you. My Lord, bless them all."

One day he went through the mosque and saw a group of women sitting there. He greeted them with a sign[16] of his hand.

When the Prophet met anyone of his companions, he would be the first to greet him. He would shake hands with him and pray for him. When he shook hands with anyone, he did not take his hand away until the other person took his hand away. When he met a man and spoke to him, he would not turn his face away from him until that person had turned his face away.

The Prophet would stop to speak to anyone who wished him to stop. A maid or a woman might request him to stop and he would stop to speak to her. `Adiy ibn Hatim related in detail his first meeting with the Prophet: "As I was walking alongside him, a woman who had a child with her called out to him, saying, 'Messenger of God, we have something to say to you.' They spoke

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15 Perfume merchants used to keep their perfumes in a special basket, and the reference here is to such a basket.

16 He lifted his hand in a way that was recognized as a greeting.

to him privately as he stood with them. They continued for a long time, until I moved towards him. I thought: 'I am certain that you are no follower of my religion or the religion of al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir.[17] Had you been a king, no boy and woman could have stopped you as long as this. I felt my heart warming to him."

The Prophet was very spontaneous in his walk, affecting no artificial seriousness. One day he passed by a young man who was skinning a slaughtered sheep. However, the young man did not do his job well. The Prophet went up to him and said: "Move aside so that I will teach you how to do it. I see you do not do it well." The Prophet then put his hand in between the skin and the flesh of the sheep, until it was covered by the shoulder. He then said to him: "This is how you should skin it, young man." He then left him.

We see how the Prophet was keen to establish means of communication between different generations. He showed clear interest in their situations and took interest in the details of their lives. We wonder what this young man felt as he saw the Prophet himself taking such an interest in his own private business and helping him to fulfil his own private assignment.

He was once with his companions in the home of one of them. Bilal came to him and told him that it was time for the congregational prayer. He left to go to the mosque. He passed by a man who had placed a large saucepan on a stove to cook something. The Prophet asked him: "Is your cooking done?" The man said: "It is ready, messenger of God." The Prophet took a bite of it and chewed it as he walked. He continued to chew it until he was ready to start the prayer."

Here we see life at its most simple and spontaneous. This is how the Prophet lived with his companions. In this instance, he took a bite and continued to chew it as he walked. How far removed his behaviour is from that of arrogant and snobbish people! As for the man who was the Prophet's host in this instance, he was very happy. Perhaps he told everyone whom he met on that

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17 Al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir was the King of al-Hirah, which was in Iraq. He was a Christian king, affiliated to the Persian Empire, but the Emperor later killed him. `Adiy himself was a Christian before he accepted Islam after this meeting with the Prophet.

day how the Prophet took a bite of his food and ate it in front of him, as though this action was a special medal for him. With such remarkable and spontaneous behaviour, the Prophet must have become very close to people in their lives.

When he wanted to visit some people, he would not directly face the door. He would step aside to the right or left, because houses were small and had no screen behind the door. Therefore, when the Prophet stood at the door, he would say a greeting: *salamu `alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh*, i.e. Peace be to you together with God's grace and blessings. If there was no answer, he would repeat it three times. If there was still no answer, he would leave.

One day the Prophet visited Sa`d ibn `Ubadah and as he stood at the door he said *salamu `alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh*, [i.e. peace be to you, together with God's grace and blessings]. Sa`d heard the greeting and answered it quietly so that the Prophet would not hear his reply. The Prophet again said: *salamu `alaykum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh*. Again Sa`d answered quietly. Once more, the Prophet repeated the greeting and Sa`d did the same. The Prophet started to leave. Sa`d quickly joined him and said: "By Him who sent you with the message of the truth, every time you said your greeting I answered it. I only wanted you to offer us more of peace and prayer for God's grace."

Visiting Friends and Relatives

The Prophet might go during the morning hours to visit some of his relatives or friends. For example, he went sometimes to see his daughter, Fatimah, at home, so that he could see his grandson, al-Hasan ibn `Ali. Abu Hurayrah reports that the Prophet went out one midmorning. He found me in the mosque. He took my hand and I went with him. He was reclining on my hand, and we walked without either of us speaking to the other. We first went to the market place of the Jewish tribe, the Qaynuqa`. He went around the market looking at what was going on. He then left, and I remained with him. He reached the yard in front of Fatimah's home and he sat there. He said: "Where is the little one? Where is the little one? Where is the little one? Call al-Hasan ibn `Ali to come." No one answered him. Fatimah detained al-Hasan for a while and we thought that she might be washing him and giving him a necklace to wear.[18] The Prophet then left and I left with him, until we came into the mosque where he sat and covered himself. He then said: "Where is the little one? Call the little one for me." Soon enough, al-Hasan came rushing and he jumped at the Prophet's cover and fell in his lap. They both hugged each other. He kissed al-Hasan and held him at his chest. Al-Hasan put his hand in the Prophet's beard. The Prophet then opened his mouth and the boy put his mouth on the Prophet's mouth. The Prophet said: "My Lord, I love him; so You love him and love anyone who loves him." He repeated this prayer three times.

Abu Hurayrah often remembered this scene. He said: "Whenever I saw al-Hasan, tears sprang to my eyes."

One day the Prophet went to Fatimah's home and asked about her husband, `Ali, saying: "Where is your cousin?" She said: "There was some disagreement between us and he left. He sent someone to look for him, and he was then told that `Ali was asleep in the mosque. He went to the mosque and he saw `Ali lying there on the ground, with his upper robe having fallen off his side. There was dust on `Ali's body. The Prophet began to remove the dust off him

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[18] That necklace was made of some perfumery plants.

and said to him: "Get up, Abu Turab. Get up, Abu Turab." [Turab means dust].

He frequently visited Umm Ayman, his nurse when he was a child. One day he went to visit her and she brought him some food or drink. He either was fasting or he did not want to eat. He returned it without having had any. She moved towards him remonstrating with him, showing her displeasure and raising her voice because he would not eat. Umm Ayman could do that because of her position with him as his nurse when he was young. Her displeasure was due to her great love, just like a mother would remonstrate with her son. All peace and blessings are due to Prophet Muhammad who could tolerate all this with a gentle smile.

He also visited his companions. He would go and visit the weaker elements and those who were ill. He would accept their invitations and at times he would go to them alone. For example, he accepted an invitation by Mulaykha, Anas ibn Malik's grandmother who invited him to have a meal she had prepared. He visited her and ate of the food she made. He then said: "Now rise so that we can pray together." Ansa ibn Malik said: "I took a mat of straw that had turned black because of long usage. I sprinkled some water on it. The Prophet stood up and I stood behind him with an orphan boy, while the old woman stood behind us. The Prophet led us in a prayer of two *rak`ahs* then left."

He might accept an invitation, going with some members of his household. Anas reports that the Prophet had a Persian neighbour who was known for his delicious cooking. In fact, his cooking smelled very appetizing. One day he cooked something for the Prophet and came around to invite him. The Prophet said: "May I bring `A'ishah with me?" The man said: "No". The Prophet then said: "No". The man came again to invite him, but the Prophet again said: "This one comes with me". The man said "No." The Prophet said: "No." Once more the man came to invite him and the Prophet once more asked him: "And this one?" On this third occasion, the man said: "Yes." Both of them came fast to his home.

One day he was invited by a tailor who was an ally of a tribe. Anas said: "I went with God's messenger to partake of his food. He placed before the Prophet some bread made of barley and a stew made with pumpkin and dried meat. The man then went on

working. The Prophet ate of the pumpkin and liked it. I saw him choosing the pumpkin around the plate. When I saw that, I took the ones near me and put them in front of him. I did not eat it then, but I have liked pumpkin ever since."

When invited, the Prophet might go with some of his companions. An example was his visit to `Itban ibn Malik who requested him to come and offer some prayer in his home. He said: "Messenger of God, my eyesight has badly weakened. I lead the prayer with my people. When it rains, the valley between me and them will be running fast and I cannot reach their mosque to lead the prayer. I would love that you come over and pray in my house, so that I will make the place where you pray my place of prayer." The Prophet said to him: "I will do, God willing." He went to him the following day in midmorning. With him were Abu Bakr, `Umar and a few of his companions. The Prophet asked `Itban: "Where would you like me to pray in your home?" `Itban showed him an area and put a mat of straw there after sprinkling its edges with water. The Prophet led them in a prayer of two *rak`ahs*. `Itban requested the Prophet to stop and have something to eat as he had prepared some food. The Prophet stayed and ate at his place.

The Prophet was keen to please his hosts. He extended his kindness to them all. His fine manners extended his kindness to their children. Anas said: "The Prophet was the best man in his manners. He used to come to us to socialize. I had a brother who was only three years of age. We called him Abu `Umayr. When the Prophet came to us, he would joke and play with him. One day he came to us but found the child sad. He asked my mother: "Umm Sulaym; what is the matter with Abu `Umayr? He looks sad and withdrawn". She said: "Messenger of God, his *nughayr*[19] with which he played has died." The Prophet went to him, rubbed his head and asked him, "Abu `Umayr, what happened to the *nughayr*? Abu `Umayr, what happened to the *nughayr*?"

Mahmud ibn al-Rabi` said: "I recall when God's messenger sparkled my face with some water he took from a pail used to draw the water from a well in our house. I was only five then."

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[19] *Nughayr* is the Arabic name that refers to a small bird like the sparrow.

We see how this pleasant play impressed Mahmud so as to remember it after a long time. We may also wonder how the Prophet with all his preoccupations attended to a sad child, asking him about his little bird and how he sought to please other children. How pleased those children must have felt to see the Prophet coming close to them. How delighted their parents must have felt as they saw their children loved by the Prophet.

When the Prophet visited any of his companions and ate at his place, he would pray for him and his family. He once visited Sa`d ibn `Ubadah who put before him some bread and oil. The Prophet ate of that, then said: "May fasting people break their fast at your place; may devout people eat your food; and may the angels pray for you."

Once the Prophet visited Busr ibn Abi Busr. When he approached his house, Busr and his wife came out to welcome him. They put a velvety cloth for him to sit on. Busr then said to his wife: "Bring your food". She brought a plate in which there was flour cooked with butter, water and salt. She placed before the Prophet. He ate of it and they shared the food with him. There remained some food in the plate. The Prophet then prayed for them, saying: "My Lord, forgive them their sins and bestow Your mercy on them. Bless them and grant them abundant provisions."

One day the Prophet visited Jabir ibn `Abdullah at his home. Jabir said to his wife: "God's messenger will come around midday. Do not do anything to displease the Prophet, nor talk to him nor ask him anything. He then slaughtered a fat goat he had. When he placed it before the Prophet, he looked at him and said: "Jabir, you seem to know that we love meat." He ate along with all those who were with him. When the Prophet was about to leave, Jabir's wife, who was hiding herself somewhere in the house, called out to him and said: "Messenger of God, pray for me and for my husband. The Prophet said: "God's peace and blessings be with you and your husband." Later, Jabir said to his wife: "Haven't I told you not to speak to God's messenger?" She said: "Would you have thought that God would bring His messenger to my home and then I fail to request him to pray for me and my husband before he left?"

Those noble people, the Prophet's noble companions, were the recipients of his prayers and blessings. The fact that His messenger lived among them was a great favour God bestowed on them.

As we have seen, his visits were a source of delight for them all. These visits were an honour to the adults among them, full of care for their children, and a total blessing to them all. At the same time, his visits were full of education and instruction, aiming to consolidate the right values in their hearts in the Prophet's unique and highly refined way of education. `Abdullah ibn `Amir ibn Rabi`ah reports: "God's messenger visited us when I was a young boy. I wanted to go out to play. My mother said to me: '`Abdullah, come here; I want to give you something.' The Prophet asked her: 'What do you want to give him?' She said: 'I am giving him some dates.' The Prophet said: 'If you do not, your words will be entered in your record as a lie.'" We note here how the Prophet gives this instruction to the mother in order to firmly instil the value of speaking the truth in the child's mind. The child learnt this value fully and reported it to the Muslim community in later years. Thus you, dear reader, and I have learnt it.

The Prophet visited Sa`d ibn `Ubadah. When he sat with him attended by others, Bashir ibn Sa`d said to him: "Messenger of God, God has commanded us to bless you. How do we do it?"[20] The Prophet was silent for some time and some people present wished that the question was not put to him. The Prophet then said to them: "Say: our Lord, bless Muhammad and Muhammad's household just as You blessed Abraham and Abraham's household. Bestow Your favours on Muhammad and Muhammad's household just as You bestowed Your favours on Abraham and Abraham's household among all mankind. You are the One worthy of praise, the Glorious. As for the greeting, it is just as you know."

We may wonder at the Prophet's remaining silent for a while. People's minds wandered far and wide. They were eager to hear his answer. Hence, when he gave his answer, they were so keen to learn

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[20] Bashir's question refers to the Qur'anic verse: "God and His angels bless the Prophet. Believers! Bless him and give him greetings of peace." (33: 56)

it that it could not be forgotten. May all peace and blessings be to the best teacher of goodness.

When the Prophet visited `Itban ibn Malik, a large number of people gathered in his home. One man said: "What happened to Malik ibn al-Dukhshum? I have not seen him for a while." Another man said: "He is a hypocrite. He does not love God and His messenger." The Prophet said to him: "Do not say that. Have you not heard him saying, 'there is no deity other than God', seeking only to earn God's pleasure?" The man said: "God and His messenger know best. As for us, we only see him befriending and talking to the hypocrites." The Prophet said: "God has forbidden that anyone who declares that 'there is no deity other than God', seeking only to please God, should be thrown in hell."

We should reflect on how the Prophet used this visit to teach his companions, and all Muslims, that they must protect the honour of their fellow Muslims. They must not speak ill of them in their absence. His teaching also shows that we must always look at the positive aspects of all people. The most important of these is the belief in God's oneness. This is clearly seen in the Prophet's drawing his listeners' attention to the fact that the man in question had declared his belief that 'there is no deity other than God.'

I wonder how pure our meetings and conversations will be if we abstain from talking ill of everyone who declares that 'there is no deity other than God'.

Visiting the Sick

The Prophet also visited those who were sick. Indeed, his presence at the time of pain and suffering provided treatment[21] and comforted patients.

One example was his visit to Sa`d ibn `Ubadah when he was ill. The Prophet visited him, accompanied by `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Awf, Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas and `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud. When the Prophet entered the room, he realized that Sa`d had lost consciousness. His family were around him. The Prophet asked them: "Has he passed away?" They said: "No, messenger of God." The Prophet was tearful. When those present saw him weeping, they also wept. He said: "Do you not hear? God does not punish anyone for tearful eyes or a sorrowful heart. He punishes for what this [pointing to his tongue] may do, or He may bestow His grace."

This is just an example of the Prophet's compassion: his eyes were tearful simply because one of his companions lost consciousness. I wonder what were Sa`d ibn `Ubadah's feelings when he regained consciousness and recovered, then learnt that the Prophet wept when he saw him in that condition. How did Sa`d's sons, relatives and attendants feel to see the Prophet sharing their worry and sadness, feeling as they felt? He appeared to experience the same feelings of pain and sorrow that they experienced. Such was the Prophet's compassion. No wonder. God who knows him has described him in these words: "`He is] tender and full of compassion towards the believers." (9: 128)

Another example is his visit to Jabir ibn `Abdullah. Jabir reports: "I fell ill. The Prophet came to visit me accompanied by Abu Bakr. They came walking when I was being nursed at my people's quarters, the Salamah clan. He saw me as I had lost consciousness. I was unaware of anything. The Prophet performed his ablution and then sprinkled some of the water he used for his ablution on me. I soon regained consciousness and found God's messenger by my side. I asked him: 'Messenger of God, what shall I

[21] The Prophet often gave advice on what a patient should use to lessen his pain.

do with my property, as I have no immediate heir, neither parent nor child.' He did not answer me, until the Qur'anic verse explaining the inheritance in such a case was revealed."

What we should know is that Jabir, the patient who asked the Prophet how his property would be divided should he die in that illness, lived around 70 years after the Prophet had passed away. This scene remained present with him.

We need to reflect a little on Jabir's words: "I soon regained consciousness and found God's messenger by my side." As he reports the event, he sounds as if he was looking at him now and relives the surprise.

Nothing is felt more keenly by people than to find you close at hand when they are in pain or feeling weak. Such was the Prophet with his companions. They never missed him at a moment of pain. He was always there to comfort them. Nor did they miss him at a moment of happiness. He was always there to please them. Hence, their unequalled love of him.

In the Orchards in Madinah

On some of his visits, the Prophet might go to some orchards in Madinah, to relax and enjoy the shade there. He would meet there some of his closest companions. For example, he used to go to a garden called Bayruha', which belonged to Abu Talhah al-Ansari. He would go there, sit in the shade and drink its refreshing water. It used to face the mosque from its northern side. It is no longer in existence, as it was part of the extension of the Prophet's mosque.

He might at times go to other orchards belonging to the Ansar. Abu Hurayrah reports on one such occasion: "We were seated around God's messenger, and with us were Abu Bakr, `Umar and others. The Prophet left us and went away. His absence was long, and we feared that something unpleasant might have happened to him. We were really worried, so we rose. I was the first to worry. I, therefore, went out looking for the Prophet. I reached an orchard belonging to the Ansar. I went around it, trying to find its door, but there was none. There was a little stream going into the garden from a well outside. I drew myself together so that I could go in through that opening, just like a fox would do. I went in and found God's messenger there. He said: "Abu Hurayrah!" I said: "Yes, messenger of God. He gave me his shoes and said: "Take my shoes and go out. Whoever you meet outside this orchard who declares that 'there is no deity other than God', firmly believing in it, then give him the happy news that he will be in heaven."

When he went to Quba', he might go to the Aris well, which is situated to the west of the Quba' mosque. It is the well in which the Prophet's ring fell during the reign of the third Caliph, `Uthman, and could not be recovered. Muslim generations and Muslim states preserved the well for many centuries, but it was buried in our modern times. Abu Musa al-Ash`ari reports:

> God's messenger went into the place of the Aris well. I, therefore, sat at the door which was made of dried date branches, until he had relieved himself and then performed his ablutions. I went up to him to find him sitting at the

> Aris well, on the short wall at its top, with his legs bare up to his knees. His legs were to the inside of the well. He had a stick in his hand with which he mixed water with the mud. I greeted him and left him to sit at the door. I thought that I would be God's messenger's doorman on that day, although he did not order me to do so. Abu Bakr came and requested permission to come in. The Prophet said to me: "Admit him and give him the news that he will be in heaven." He thanked and praised God before entering. He sat on the short wall to the Prophet's right. `Umar then came and requested permission to come in. The Prophet said to me: "Admit him and give him the news that he will be in heaven." He thanked and praised God before entering. He sat on the short wall to the Prophet's left. `Uthman was the next one to come. He requested permission to come in. The Prophet said to me: "Admit him and give him the news that he will be in heaven after he had been through great hardship." I went up to him and said: "Come in. God's messenger gives you the news that you will be in heaven, but you will go through great hardship." He said: "I pray for God's help. My Lord, enable me to persevere in adversity." He entered, but he found that the short wall was taken. He sat on the other side, facing them.

The Prophet's visits to the orchards of Madinah were for the purpose of relaxation, seeking to stay in the shade in the very hot climate of Madinah. Such visits gave him some refreshment and renewed strength to carry on with his daily tasks. Besides, they brought much happiness to the owners who were very happy to receive the Prophet in their own orchards. They realized that his presence brought blessings into their orchards, as he was blessed wherever he happened to be.

The Day's Nap

Late in the morning when midday approached, the Prophet would go to the rooms of the one of his wives who had him that day. When he entered home, the first thing he did was to brush his teeth and greet his family. He then offered the midmorning voluntary prayer, al-Duha, in four *rak`ahs*; or he might increase it to six or eight *rak`ahs*.

He might find some food at home and he would eat if he had not had breakfast earlier. Food might be offered to him when he is fasting and he would end his fast. `A'ishah reports that she said to him one day: "Messenger of God, a gift has been sent to us, or a visitor came in, and I have kept something for you." He asked: "What is it?" She said: "*Hays*," [which is a dish made of dates, clarified butter and dried milk blended together]. He said: "Then bring it." She brought it for him and he ate of it. He then said: "I had started my day fasting."

It was on one such occasion that he once saw his wife, Juwayriyyah, sitting in her place of prayer glorifying God. He had entered her room earlier in the morning, before his usual session with his companions, and found her in the same position. He asked her on this second time: "Have you been in this situation ever since I left you?" She answered in the affirmative. He said: "But since I left you I said four phrases three times. Had these phrases been weighed against all your glorifications today, they would have been heavier in the scales. These phrases are: "Limitless is God in His glory, and all praise be to Him as many times as the total number of His creation, and as would please Him, and equal to the weight of his Throne, and the ink to write His words."

This was the time when he was alone with his family at home. Yet some women might come to him seeking advice on some religious questions which they would have been too shy to put to him in front of men. They asked their questions when his wives were present. Thus we learnt his rulings on women's intimate matters.

One case was when a woman from the Ansar came to see him when he was at `A'ishah's home. She asked him how a woman

should take a bath at the end of her period. He said: "A woman should bring her water and cleaning material. She then performs the ablution, i.e. *wudu'*, well. She then pours some water over her head and rubs her head well so as to reach the skin. She then pours water over all her body. After that, she takes a musked piece of cotton and purifies herself with it." The woman asked him: "How does she purifies herself with it?" He said: "Limitless is God in His glory. You purify yourself with it." He felt shy and turned away. `A'ishah said: "When I saw him feeling shy, I drew the woman towards me and told her: you should rub with it the area where the blood discharge was. He heard me and did not object."

Umm Sulaym came once when he was with his wife, Umm Salamah. She asked him: "Messenger of God, if a woman sees herself in a dream having intercourse with her husband, must she take a bath?" Umm Salamah said to her: "What a shame, Umm Sulaym! You have exposed women in front of God's messenger." Umm Sulaym rejoined: "God does not shy of stating the truth. It is better to ask the Prophet about what is problematic for us than to remain ignorant." The Prophet came in support of Umm Sulaym, saying to his wife, Umm Salamah: "It is to you that should be said: what a shame! The best of you is the one who asks about what is of concern to her. Yes, Umm Sulaym, she must take a bath if she has a discharge." Umm Salamah said: "God's messenger, do women have a discharge?" The Prophet said: "What else makes her children similar to her? Women are men's full sisters."

Ansari women were bold in putting their questions, requesting clarifications. `A'ishah said of them: "Good women are the Ansari women: shyness has not stopped them from seeking to learn about their religion."[22]

Sometimes, the Prophet might be visited by some of his closest companions for something that might have occurred. Once the Prophet was in his home, lying on his bed, wearing a garment that belonged to `A'ishah.[23] His thighs or lower legs were exposed. Abu

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[22] This is the latter part of the *hadith* that mentions the Ansari woman who asked the Prophet how to purifies herself after her period.

[23] The sort of garment mentioned here was worn by both men and women. It could be used by men as both top or lower garment.

Bakr came and requested permission to come in. He was admitted with the Prophet remaining in his position. The Prophet attended to the business he came for and then Abu Bakr left. `Umar then came, requested entry, was admitted with the Prophet remaining in the same position. He had his business attended to and left. Then `Uthman came and requested entry. The Prophet sat up and ensured that his clothes were properly worn before admitting `Uthman. He came in, spoke to the Prophet, had his business attended to and left. `A'ishah said: "Messenger of God, Abu Bakr came in and you did not care to arrange anything,[24] then `Umar came in and you did the same. When `Uthman came, you sat up and ensured that you were properly dressed." The Prophet said: "I feel shy before a man in whose presence angels feel shy. `Uthman is a bashful person and I feared that if I admitted him while I was in that position that his shyness would prevent him from putting his business to me."

`A'ishah described the Prophet's status when he was at home alone with his wife. She said: "When he was in his home's privacy, he was the easiest and most generous of people. He was just a man like any of you, except that he was often smiling and laughing. He was not distinguished from any human being, and he was always attending to his family's needs. He would mend his shoes and clothes, milk his sheep and serve himself. He would do at home what any man would do."

Here we see a scene of spiritual integration in the Prophet's life. His home consisted of one small room for each of his wives. There was little in which his wives needed any help so as to be "attending to his family's needs". Indeed this description reflects the moral summit the Prophet attained, sharing with his family whatever they were doing so that they would feel that the home belonged to all of them and that they shared their life together. His attitude at home sends many messages that are focused on the care a husband should take of his wife and the importance the Prophet attached to family life. All blessings are due to the one who was for mankind the best of humans, and was the best of people to his family.

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[24] What she meant was that the Prophet did not care to change how he appeared.

Just as there was in the Prophet's home ample space for love and compassion, there was also plenty of opportunity for entertainment, delight and spontaneous behaviour. One day, Sawdah visited `A'ishah in her room and the Prophet sat between his two wives. He put one of his legs in `A'ishah's lap and the other in Sawdah's lap. `A'ishah had cooked *harirah*, which is a dish of very thick soup made of flour. She invited Sawdah to eat of it, but Sawdah said: "I do not fancy it; I am not eating". `A'ishah said: "You shall eat or I shall throw it on your face. Sawdah refused, so `A'ishah took some of the food in her hand and wiped Sawdah's face with it. The Prophet laughed and lifted his leg from Sawdah's lap so that she could pay her back. He took some food from the tray and gave it to Sawdah, saying: "Wipe her face." She took some of it and wiped `A'ishah's face with it. The Prophet kept laughing at what they both did. As they were all merrily laughing in that room in the Prophet's home, they overheard `Umar who was in the mosque, calling out to his son: `Abdullah ibn `Umar; `Abdullah ibn `Umar!' The Prophet said to his two wives: "Go and wash your faces, for I think `Umar wants to come in." `Umar approached the Prophet's door and said: "Peace be upon you, Prophet, together with God's mercy and blessings. Peace be to you all. May I enter?" The Prophet said: "Come in; come in."

Such play and relaxed atmosphere was characteristic of the freedom and openness that the Prophet imparted to Islamic life. "Our faith allows leisure."

The Prophet used to take a nap until shortly before Zuhr prayer. He took his naps in his homes where his wives lived. He never went into any woman's home other than his wives, except Umm Sulaym. He went into her home and at times took his nap at her place. She was one of his relations he was not allowed to marry.[25] He was asked about this and his answer was: "I feel compassion to her, as her brother was killed fighting with me."

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[25] Scholars are agreed that the Prophet went into Umm Sulaym's home because she was related to him in a way that prohibited marriage between them. They differed, however, on the cause of such prohibition and whether it was due to blood relation between them or due to a relation based on breast-feeding, or whether it was a special case for God's messenger. He never entered any woman's home other than his wives and Umm Sulaym and her sister Umm Haram. Vis. Al-Nawawi, *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 13, pp. 57-58; Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 9, p. 203 & Vol. 11, pp. 78 – 80.

He might enter Umm Sulaym's home and sleep on her couch when she was not at home. Once, she was told that the Prophet was sleeping on her couch and she went home. It was summer time. The Prophet was profusely sweating to the extent that his sweat gathered over a piece of hide that was on the couch. Umm Sulaym got something to gather that sweat and squeezed it in a bottle. The Prophet woke up as she was doing that. He asked her what she was doing. She said: "I am taking your sweat and putting it in a bottle. I hope that I will give it to our children for blessing. He told her that she did right and prayed for her.

To Quba'

Every Saturday, the Prophet went in midmorning to Quba', either riding or walking. He prayed in the mosque there. The people of Quba' who belonged to the clan of `Awf ibn al-Harith might come to see him in the mosque. They would greet him even when he was praying and he would reply with a signal.

When he went to Quba', he would take his nap at the home of Umm Haram bint Milhan, Umm Sulaym's sister and the wife of `Ubadah ibn al-Samit. She also was one of his relatives who was unlawful for him to marry. One day, he visited her. She gave him some food and she groomed his hair. As she was doing that, he dozed off. He then woke up smiling. She asked him: "What causes you to laugh, messenger of God?" He said: "I was shown people from among my community, going on jihad for God's cause, sailing in the sea, like kings on their couches." She said: "Please pray to God to include me with them." The Prophet prayed for her. He then dozed off a second time. Again he woke up smiling. She asked him the reason for laughing and he said again: "I was shown people from among my community going on jihad for God's cause." Once more she requested him to pray that she would be among them. He said: "You are with the first ones." Umm Haram actually travelled in the sea with the Muslim fleet during the reign of Mu`awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. After landing in Cyprus, she fell off her mount and died a martyr.

What sort of great news of future events the Prophet was giving in a little hamlet deep in the middle of Arabia, at a time when the Muslim community was in poverty and lack of resources. Yet he was telling his woman companion that his people would be sailing the Mediterranean, the sea that was furthest from Madinah, in a state of strength and pride, 'like kings on their couches'.

At that time, seafaring was far removed from the minds of the Arabs, let alone fighting sea battles. Which was more remarkable: this news given by the Prophet which was far beyond all probabilities, expectations and surrounding conditions, or the certainty that Umm Haram showed when she heard the news? She did not question the Prophet about it. She did not ask how could

that be when the conditions of the Muslim community were so unhelpful. Nor did she ask about the time when it would happen. She simply asked for a prayer that she would be among this group, as though she could discern the event.

In the Afternoon

When Bilal called the *adhan* announcing Zuhr, or midday prayer, the Prophet would wake up if he were still asleep. He answered the call to prayer, repeating the same phrases. He would then perform his ablution if he needed it before praying four *rak`ahs* at home. He used to say: "This is an hour at which the gates of heaven are open, and I love that a good deed of mine should be presented."

The Prophet would wait at home until it was time for the congregational prayer. He might have some of his grandchildren at home, such as al-Hasan and al-Husayn the sons of his daughter Fatimah, or Umamah the daughter of his daughter Zaynab, and he would be playing with them. When Bilal informed him that it was time for the prayer, he would go out. He might kiss one of his wives as he went out for the prayer. When he went out, Bilal would call the *iqamah*, i.e. the start of the congregational prayer. On seeing him coming, the Prophet's companions would rise for the prayer.

They might be surprised to see him coming out, carrying al-Hasan or al-Husayn, or his granddaughter Umamah, on his shoulder. He might place the child next to him as he led the prayer. On a particular occasion, he came out for the prayer, carrying either al-Hasan or al-Husayn. He put the child down and started the prayer. During his prayer the Prophet remained long in one of the prostrations, i.e. *sujud*. One of his companions, Shaddad ibn al-Had lifted his head a little and saw the child over the Prophet's back as he was in his prostration. When the prayer was over, people said to the Prophet: "Messenger of God, you were very long in one prostration and we thought that something might have happened or that you might be receiving revelations from on high." He said: "No, nothing of this happened, but my son mounted on my back and I did not like to hasten him until he came down."

He might carry the child on his shoulder as he prayed. When he bowed, he would put it down and when he rose to stand up, he would carry it. He did this carrying his granddaughter, Umamah bint Zaynab.

The Prophet used to offer the Zuhr prayer early in its time range. He would read about thirty verses of the Qur'an in each of the first two *rak`ahs*, making the first *rak`ah* longer than the second, and would read around half that in the other two *rak`ahs*. He might make his prayer very long, to the extent that when the *iqamah* is called, a person may go to al-Baqi` to relieve himself before going home to perform the ablution and come to the mosque, joining the prayer when the Prophet would still be in the first *rak`ah*. He read in secret, but people realized that he was reading as they saw his beard moving. They might at times hear him reading a verse or two a little aloud.

When the prayer was over, the Prophet would turn to face his companions. Should there be any event or something unusual, he would address the people after the Zuhr prayer, as this was a time when most people were present. They would have had their day nap. They would be relaxed and would fully appreciate what was being said. Something of this sort took place when a delegation from Mudar arrived. The Prophet noticed that they suffered poverty and hunger. He was distressed to see them in this condition. He stood on the pulpit and addressed the community after Zuhr prayer. He started with praising God and glorifying Him. He then said: "God has revealed in His book, the Qur'an: 'Mankind, fear your Lord, who has created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the two of them spread abroad so many men and women. Fear God, in whose name you appeal to one another, and be mindful of your ties of kinship. Indeed, God is ever watching over you.' (4: 1) He also says: 'Believers, have fear of God. Let every soul consider carefully what it sends ahead for tomorrow. Remain God-fearing, for God is fully aware of all that you do.' (59: 18) A person may donate something in money, be it much or little, or he may donate something of his clothes, or a portion of what he has of flour or dates. He went on until he said that a donation might be as little as half a date, encouraging people to be charitable and urging them to come forward with their donations."

Another example was his address when Ibn al-Lutbiyyah returned after having completed a mission assigned to him by the Prophet. He said: "Messenger of God, these here belong to you, and this was given to me as a gift." After Zuhr prayer, the Prophet

addressed the people. He started with the declaration of God's oneness, praised God and glorified Him, and went on to say: "Now, I may employ one of you and assign a task to him. He goes to fulfil it and comes back to say, 'this belongs to you and this is a gift given to me'. Let him sit in his family home and wait until he receives his gift. By Him who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, anyone of you who takes something to which he has no right shall come on the Day of Judgement carrying it. I shall recognize someone carrying a noisy camel, or a mooing cow or a bleating sheep." He then lifted his hands high and the whiteness of his armpits was visible, and said: "My Lord, I have delivered Your message, repeating this three times."

One day after Zuhr prayer, he stood on the pulpit and mentioned the Last Hour heralding the Day of Judgement. He stated that it is preceded by very grave matters. Then he said: "Whoever wishes to ask me something should come forward. By God, whatever question you put to me I will answer you, as long as I am standing in this position." Most people were in tears. The Prophet repeated several times his invitation to them to put their questions to him. A man called `Abdullah ibn Hudhafah of the Sahm clan stood up and said: "Messenger of God, who is my father?" When `Abdullah had a quarrel or argument with some people, they alleged that he did not belong to his father. The Prophet answered him: "Your father is Hudhafah." When the Prophet had repeated urging them to put their questions, `Umar sat down and said: "We are happy to believe that God alone is our Lord and to have Islam as our faith and Muhammad as God's messenger." The Prophet then stopped repeating that. Then he said: "*Awla*.[26] By Him who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, heaven and hell were shown to me a short while ago against this wall. I have never seen anything of good and evil as I saw today. If you were to know what I know, you would laugh little and cry much." This was the hardest day for the Prophet's companions. They even covered their heads and cried aloud.

The Prophet also addressed the people after Zuhr prayer on the day when the punishment of adultery was enforced on Ma`iz

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[26] This Arabic word carries a sense of threat. In this context it means, 'you may soon see what you dislike'.

(May God be pleased with him). After praising and glorifying God, he said: "Is it going to be that whenever we go on a campaign for God's cause, someone stays behind with our families, making noise like that of a billy-goat.[27] He would give a woman something paltry.[28] By God, by God, should anyone be brought to me for having done so, I will certainly punish him." He neither prayed for Ma`iz's forgiveness nor spoke ill of him.

It appears that these speeches were given when something important had occurred that should be dealt with immediately. It could not be left until the following Friday when the Prophet addressed the people before the prayer.

The Prophet then returned to his home where he offered a prayer of two *rak`ahs*, which is the regular recommended prayer after Zuhr.

The Prophet then came out to be with his companions. He might stay with them up to the time when the Asr prayer was due, as he did when he stayed with the delegation of the `Abd Qays tribe, staying with them from Zuhr to Asr prayers.

He might go at this time to attend to some needs of the community. On one occasion he was told that the people of Quba', the clan of `Amr ibn `Awf, had some conflict and trouble issued between them to the extent that they threw stones at one another. He said to some of his companions: "Let us go and make peace between them." He said to Bilal: "If the Asr prayer falls due and I am not back, tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayer." When it was time, Bilal called the *adhan*, and when it was time to pray, he said to Abu Bakr that the Prophet must have been detained and the prayer is due. Could you please lead the prayer? Abu Bakr said: "Yes, if you wish." Bilal called the *iqamah* and Abu Bakr stepped forward and started the prayer. The people in the mosque joined him. The Prophet came at this time and moved forward ahead of the rows until he stood in the front row. The people were clapping, but Abu Bakr did not turn during prayer. When people's clapping increased, he turned his face a little and saw the Prophet. He wanted to move

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[27] The Prophet referred here to the noise made by a billy goat when mating.

[28] This refers to any amount paid to a woman for having sex with her.

back to allow the Prophet to lead the prayer, but the Prophet signalled him to stay in place. Abu Bakr raised his hands to heaven, praised God and glorified Him as the Prophet had taught him. He then stepped backward to be in the row and the Prophet stepped forward to lead the prayer. When he finished, he turned towards the people and said: "Why did you clap when something occurred during the prayer. Clapping is allowed only for women. If something happened during prayer, you should only say *Subhan Allah*, i.e. limitless is God in His glory. Anyone who heard this would turn his face." Then he addressed Abu Bakr asking him why he did not continue to lead the prayer when he clearly signalled him to do so. Abu Bakr said: "It is not right that I should lead when the Prophet is present."

Another example was when he went to al-Aswaf, to the north of al-Baqi` to see the daughters of Sa`d ibn al-Rabi` and give them their shares of their father's estate. They were the first women to inherit their father in Islam. He went to see them in midmorning. He was brought some food that included bread and meat. They had prepared it for him. He ate, as did the people who were with him. He then performed the ablution in readiness for Zuhr prayer. The people with him also performed the ablution. He led them in Zuhr prayer. After the prayer he sat down to complete the division of the estate among Sa`d's daughters, until it was time for Asr when this business was completed. They served him what remained of bread and meat. He and the people with him ate, then he stood up to lead the people in Asr prayer. Neither he nor anyone else needed to perform the ablution again.

Asr: Mid-Afternoon

When the *adhan* for Asr prayer was called, the Prophet would wait until the people have gathered. He encouraged people to voluntarily pray four *rak`ahs* before the obligatory prayer. He used to say: "May God bestow His mercy on the one who prays four *rak`ahs* before Asr." When the people had gathered, he would come out of his home to lead the prayer. He used to offer it at the beginning of its time range, when the sun was still high. Anas reports: "No one was ever more expeditious in offering the Asr prayer than God's messenger (peace be upon him)." In this prayer his reading of the Qur'an was about half as much as he used to read in Zuhr prayer.

When he finished his prayer, the Prophet turned to his companions. If he had something to say to them, he would say it. Once he turned to them after finishing Asr prayer and said: "I am not sure whether I should tell you something or not." They said: "Messenger of God, if it is something good, please tell us, and if it is otherwise, then God and His messenger know best." He said: "Any Muslim who does the ablutions God requires of him and ensures that he does them well and in full, then performs these five obligatory prayers, then these prayers ensure his forgiveness of any sin he might have committed in between them."

One day the Prophet offered the Asr prayer and stood up to address them. In his talk he said: "Whoever of you performs his ablution well then says, 'I bear witness that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's servant and messenger', shall have all eight doors of heaven open to him. He may enter through any of them. Any Muslim performs his ablution well then stands up and offers two *rak`ahs*, fully attending to them with his heart and mind, will surely be admitted into heaven."

Compared with his talks after Zuhr prayer, the Prophet's talk after Asr was much shorter. He realized that people were tired and needed to leave to complete their day's work and to have their dinner ready. When he had finished Asr prayer, he would go to his wives. He would visit them all. He would sit close to each one, and may kiss her or flirt with her without having intercourse with any.

He ended his round at the home of the one whose turn it was on that day. He would be staying that night with her.

Sometimes all his wives would gather in the home of the one whose turn it was on that day. Perhaps that was in winter time when the days were short and the time between Asr and Maghrib was too short for the Prophet to visit each one of them at her room. In these cases he met them altogether.

On one occasion they gathered in `A'ishah's home. Zaynab bint Jahsh came over. When the Prophet came in, he put his hand on her. `A'ishah said: "This is Zaynab", and the Prophet withdrew his hand. The two of them argued and they raised their voices. Soon it was time for prayer. Abu Bakr passed by and he overheard them as they argued. He said aloud: "Come for the prayer, messenger of God, and put dust in their mouths." The Prophet came out for the prayer. `A'ishah said: "Now when the Prophet has finished the prayer, Abu Bakr will come over and will be hard on me."[29] When the Prophet finished the prayer, Abu Bakr went over and spoke very hard to `A'ishah, saying: "How can you do this?"

When the Prophet went into his home after Asr prayer, he might offer two *rak`ahs* of voluntary prayer, although he discouraged offering voluntary prayer after Asr, until Maghrib was due. It happened when a delegation from the `Abd al-Qays tribe came over to Madinah to tell the Prophet that their people had accepted Islam. He met them after Zuhr prayer. As he was preoccupied with them, he did not offer his regular voluntary prayer of two *rak`ahs* after Zuhr. On this occasion, he offered these two *rak`ahs* after Asr in compensation. Subsequently, he regularly offered them. When he offered a voluntary prayer on one occasion, it was his practice that he would make it regular afterwards. `A'ishah reports: "By Him who gathered his soul, the Prophet did not abandon these two *rak`ahs*, i.e. the ones after Asr, until he met his Lord." In most cases he spent the time after Asr at home, with his wives.

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[29] Zaynab was one of the Prophet's wives. As the meeting was in `A'ishah's home, then it was her turn that day. She was jealous that the Prophet put his hand on Zaynab and made her feelings clear. However, `A'ishah was worried that her father would be very upset at what had happened.

During the time the Prophet spent with his wives there was always pleasant family atmosphere. There was also clear pursuit of knowledge and discussion of various questions and problems. The Prophet always welcomed such questions and answered them fully. One example was `A'ishah's question about his hardest experience in his advocacy of God's message and his endeavours to convince people of its truth. She said: "Messenger of God, did you ever experience a day harder than the Day of Uhud?" He answered: "I received much ill-treatment from your people. The worst of it was that which I experienced on the day of the `Aqabah, after I had advocated my cause to Ibn `Abd Yalil ibn `Abd Kulal. He rejected me. I left, feeling very depressed and not knowing where I was heading. I only regained my awareness when I reached Qarn al-Tha`alib.[30] I lifted my eyes and I saw a cloud over my head. I looked at it and there was Gabriel. He called out to me and said: 'God has heard what your people said to you and how they rebuffed you. He has sent you the angel in charge of the mountains to give him your orders concerning them.' The angel of the mountains called me and greeted me, then said to me: 'Muhammad, God has heard what your people said to you. I am an angel in charge of the mountains. Your Lord has sent me to you to carry out your orders. You may say what you wish. If you wish I can close the two mountains over them.'[31] I said: 'No. I hope that God will create among their offspring people who will worship God alone, associating no partners with Him.'"

This sort of warm discussion between the Prophet and `A'ishah reveals how she was interested in everything that was of concern to him. She wanted to learn about his hardest experience so that she could share his feelings.

The Prophet's attitude in this instance was richly rewarded by his Lord. Before the end of his blessed life, his hopes were fulfilled. He saw many sons and daughters of idolatrous parents embracing Islam, worshipping God alone, associating no partners with Him,

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[30] This is another name of Qarn al-Manazil, near Taif, which is the point at which pilgrims enter into the state of *ihram* before reaching Makkah.

[31] These are the two mountains close to Makkah, Qubays and Qu`ayqi`an. They are renowned for the hardness of their stones.

and demonstrating their readiness to lay their lives in defence of God's messenger and his message.

One day he was speaking to `A'ishah when he told her: "Whoever is held to account on the Day of Judgement will be punished." `A'ishah questioned things, particularly when they appeared problematic, as she was eager to learn. When she heard this statement by the Prophet, she raised a question, saying: "But God says of the believers: 'He who is given his record in his right hand will in time have a lenient reckoning.'" (84: 7-8) He said: "The verse does not refer to accountability. It refers to presentation of accounts. Anyone who is questioned about his deeds on the Day of Judgment will be punished."

One day he was speaking to his wife, Hafsah, when he said: "I hope that no one who took part in the Battle of Badr and al-Hudybiyah will be in hell." She said: "Yes, they will, messenger of God." He reproached her, but she said: "Does not God say in the Qur'an: 'There is not one among you who shall not pass over it: this is, for your Lord, a decree that must be fulfilled.'" (19: 71) The Prophet said: "Have you, then, not heard Him saying next: 'But We shall save those who are God-fearing, and leave the wrongdoers there, on their knees.'" (29: 72)

That his wives should raise questions or put counter arguments could only come about after he had encouraged them to question things and think about what they are told. He certainly made discussion and interaction the only way to form convictions and accept beliefs.

Some of his companions might at times invite him to come to their quarters after Asr prayer, as they would be doing something and they loved that he should be with them. He accepted such invitations. One day after Asr prayer a man from the Salamah clan said to him: "Messenger of God, we are about to slaughter a camel and we would love that you join us." To them, this was a delightful occasion because meat was scarce in their diet. The Prophet accepted and went with them. A number of his companions also went with him. On arrival, they found out that the camel had not been slaughtered yet. It was slaughtered then, and was made in many portions. Some of its meat was cooked and they had something to eat before sunset.

Reflect on this event. God's messenger went on a summer day to the Salamah quarters at the north end of Madinah, the furthest quarters from his mosque just to join the people and share their delight at slaughtering a camel. I imagine that he went walking only to please the people and add to their happiness. The event thus was transformed from merely slaughtering a camel to a visit by the Prophet and sharing with them their delightful occasion. The Salamah people must have talked about this occasion for a long time.

How kind, benevolent and warm-hearted Prophet Muhammad was! He appears keen to seize every pleasant opportunity in order to increase people's delight and happiness. It is this characteristic that gave him his unique position in the lives of his companions.

After Sunset

When Maghrib prayer was called, the Prophet stayed only a short while before he came out. He would find his companions close to the pillars of the mosque, praying its voluntary prayer of two *rak`ahs*, as he encouraged them to do. He used to tell them: "Pray two *rak`ahs* before the Maghrib prayer." He repeated this three times, but added after the third time, "if you wish". These are two short *rak`ahs*, because the time between the *adhan* and the start of the congregational prayer at Maghrib was very short.

When the Prophet came into the mosque the prayer was called and he immediately started. He used to pray Maghrib at the beginning of its time range and finished it before the fall of darkness. It is said that when a person left the mosque after Maghrib, the light was still abundant. If he threw an arrow, he could see where it landed.

His recitation of the Qur'an in Maghrib and his prayer was mostly short. He might read a long passage, but this was rare. He once read in Maghrib Surah 7, "The Heights",[32] and on another occasion he recited Surah 52, "Mount Sinai". Maghrib was the last prayer he led before he passed away. On that occasion, he recited Surah 77, "Sent Forth".

The Prophet did not sit to talk to his companions after Maghrib as he talked to them after other prayers in the day. This was due to the fact that people needed to go home for their dinner and to rest. When he finished the obligatory prayer, he returned home and offered a prayer of two *rak`ahs* which is the regular recommended prayer. He would then have his dinner, as this was their regular dinner time. They might dine before offering Maghrib prayer, if they were fasting. Hence, the Prophet said: "If dinner is brought forth, start with it before you offer Maghrib. Do not place it ahead of your dinner."

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[32] Surah 7 is the fourth longest surah in the Qur'an, running into 26 pages, while Surah 52 runs into 2.5 pages. Surah 77 only 1.5 pages and the Prophet divided it in the first two *rak`ahs*.

He often told his companions to take with them some poor people to dine with them. He said: "Whoever has food enough for two people should take a third, and whoever has food for four people should take a fifth or a sixth."

He himself might take home ten people to share his dinner, if he had plenty of food. Yet he might go home and find nothing to eat other than some dates and water. Days on end might pass and there is nothing in his home to be eaten by anyone. One day a man who looked exhausted and hungry came to him. Signs of starvation and extreme exhaustion were clearly apparent on his face. He said by looks and words: "Messenger of God, I am in a desperate condition." The Prophet immediately sent to one of his wives asking whether she had anything to feed this hungry guest. Her answer was, "By Him who sent you with the message of the truth, I have nothing other than water." He sent to another of his wives, and her answer was similar. In fact he sent to every single one of them and their answer was the same. They had nothing but water. The Prophet then turned to his companions and asked: "Who will take this man as his guest tonight, may God have mercy on him." Abu Talhah al-Ansari said: "I will take him, messenger of God." Abu Talhah then took him home as his guest.

The Prophet's food was always placed on a tray on the ground. He never ate at a table. When his food was brought in, he said, "In the name of God", and ate from what was close to him. Never did his fingers move further than what was close to him. He would take his bites with three fingers. He instructed those who were with him to eat from the side of the tray and to leave the middle,[33] saying: "The blessing is there".

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was never fussy about his food. He ate what was available. He would ask his wives: "Do you have anything?" They might at times say: "We have nothing". On some occasions, they said: "We only have vinegar". He said: "Wholesome food vinegar is to have with bread." He never found fault with any food. If he liked it, he would eat; otherwise, he would just leave it.

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[33] i.e. the top of the food in the tray.

When he sat to eat with his companions, the occasion was never short of some pleasant talk, or a hint of good manners, or knowledge to disseminate. To give an example, `Umar ibn Abi Salamah, the Prophet's stepson was being raised in the Prophet's home. Umm Salamah, the Prophet's wife, was his mother. He used to eat with the Prophet. The Prophet noticed that the boy stretched his hand all over the tray, taking meat from different parts. The Prophet said to him: "Young lad, start your meal with mentioning God's name. Eat with your right hand and from what is close to you." `Umar said later: "This was how I ate ever since."

One day, a tray of *tharid* and meat was placed before the Prophet. He took the shoulder, which was the part of lamb he liked best, and had a bite.[34] He then said: "I shall be the leader of mankind on the Day of Judgement." He then took another bite and repeated what he said. No one asked him about that. Therefore, he said: "Would you not ask how?" They said: "How is that, messenger of God?" He said: "On the Day of Judgement, God shall gather all people of past, present and future generations in one plane, so that they will hear the caller and will see with their eyes. The sun will come close to their heads and they will keenly feel its heat. They will suffer much as it comes close. People will be in dire difficulty. They can hardly bear or stand the situation. Some of them will say: 'Do you not feel how much we are all suffering? Cannot you think of someone who will intercede for us with our Lord?' Some of them will say: 'Let us go to Adam'...." The Prophet told them the long *hadith* which speaks of the privilege of intercession with God he is given.

When he finished his food, he licked his fingers.[35] He also instructed people to lick their plates. He said: "You do not know which of your food is blessed." When the food was removed, he expressed his gratitude to God with a moving supplication: "Praise be to God, much wholesome and blessed praise. Praise be to God who has given us plenty to eat and much to drink. Our Lord cannot

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[34] The Arabic expression specifically means 'taking a bite with the front teeth only.

[35] This was the way the Prophet taught the importance of not wasting any food. Nothing should be thrown away. Even what sticks to fingers is wholesome and should be used. Food is provided to us by the grace of God, and to be grateful to God requires that we should waste nothing of it.

be rewarded or met with ingratitude. We neither turn away from Him nor deny our need of His favours. Our Lord, You are the One who has given us food and drink, riches and possessions, provided us with guidance and life. To You all praise is due for all that You have given us."

The Prophet rinsed his mouth after food and after drinking milk. He said that milk contains fat.

When he dined, he would have a drink prepared for him since the morning;[36] and if he had lunch early in the day, he would have a drink prepared for him since the night before.

If any of his wives was eating with him, he would have a pleasant conversation with her during the meal. In fact, he encouraged this, saying: "If you lift a bite to put in your wife's mouth, it earns you the reward of a charity."

`A'ishah gives us an example of what the Prophet did when he ate with her: "God's messenger used to càll me to eat with him when I was in the period. He would take a bone with some meat over it, swearing that I should eat of it. I would eat some of the meat and put it down. He then took it and ate some meat, placing his mouth where I had placed my mouth. He might then ask for a drink and swear that I should drink before him. I would take it, drink and put it down. He would then take it and drink placing his mouth where I had placed my mouth on the cup."

How many messages of love and tenderness such a loving husband sends to his beloved wife, and what level of delight he provides for her. Needless to say, the meal thus provided as much spiritual nourishment as the physical nourishment.

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[36] The drink would be water in which dates, raisins or honey had been soaked. It would not be brewed. The Prophet never had any intoxicant drink.

The Night Prayer (Isha)

The Prophet stayed at home until Isha prayer was called. He did not proceed immediately to offer this prayer. He waited for the people. If they gathered early, he would offer it then, and if they were late, he would delay the prayer. He preferred to delay this prayer, but he did not wish to make things hard for people.

He once delayed the Isha prayer. `Umar came over and called out to him, saying: "Messenger of God, women and children have gone to sleep. The Prophet came out with his head dripping. He wiped the water off his side. He said: "This is the right time. Had it not been for fear that I would be making things difficult for my community, I would have ordered that they should pray Isha at this time.

One night, the call to start the Isha prayer was made. A man stood up and said: "Messenger of God, I have something to say to you." The Prophet stood with him talking to him. The people waited and some of them even felt drowsy. The Prophet kept his prayer light but ensured that it was perfect. Anas said: "I have never prayed behind an Imam whose prayer was lighter and at the same time more perfect than God's messenger." As he was in prayer, he might hear a child crying while the mother was praying, and he would then recite only a short surah, so that not to make it hard for the mother. He said: "I start the prayer intending to make it long, but I hear a boy crying and I then make the prayer short, because I know how anxious his mother is because of his crying."

When he finished the Isha prayer, he would speak to his companions if there was something to speak about. For example, one night towards the end of his life, he finished the Isha prayer and stood up. He said: "Look at this night of yours: by the end of one hundred years from tonight, no one who is alive on the face of the earth today will be alive then." Once he delayed Isha prayer, then he led the congregation of his companions and when he finished he addressed them saying: "People have offered their prayers and gone to sleep. You are deemed to be in prayer as long as you are waiting for it."

One night he much delayed the Isha prayer[37] before coming out to lead the congregation. When the prayer was over, he said to those who attended it: "Wait a little. Rejoice, for God has bestowed on you His grace in that there is no one other than you has been praying at this time." His companions went home delighted to learn that, for it was a very happy news given to them by the Prophet.

The Prophet rarely talked to his companions after Isha prayer, and when he did, he made his talk short because people were normally tired and needed to go to sleep. Generally speaking, he preferred not to talk after Isha prayer.

When he finished the prayer, the Prophet stayed in his place until the women had left the mosque and went home before he left. When the Prophet rose to go home, the men also rose to go.

[37] The delay was until it was midnight.

In the First Half of the Night

The Prophet then returned home where he would pray the regular sunnah[38] of Isha. He then sat for a short while chatting with his wife in relaxed manner. This was a time of pleasant conversation with his family. He might go to some of his companions for an evening of relaxation. On some nights he went to the Ansar to spend some time with them. Or he might spend some evening time with Abu Bakr and `Umar in Abu Bakr's home. On these occasions, they would talk about the Muslim community and its needs. When he left, they would come out with him, enjoying his company on his way home. They would come into the mosque with him.

As he walked, the Prophet might pass by one of his companions reciting the Qur'an in the middle of the night with a melodious voice. He would stop to listen to his beautiful recitation. One night he passed by Abu Musa al-Ash`ari and stopped to listen to him as he read the Qur'an. He met him in the morning and said to him: "Abu Musa, [you would have been pleased] to see me listening to your recitation last night. You have such a voice as if you have one of the psalms of Prophet David."

He went into the mosque one night to find `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud standing up in night prayer. He was reading Surah 4, "Women", and the Prophet stood listening to his reading. He then said to Abu Bakr and `Umar: "Whoever loves to read the Qur'an fresh, like it has been revealed, then he should read it as Ibn Umm `Abd[39] reads it."

When he entered the mosque, he said a greeting in a voice that would be heard by an awake person but not loud enough to awake a

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[38] A sunnah prayer is recommended, not obligatory. Each of the five obligatory prayers is associated with some sunnah prayers that differ in the number of *rak`ahs*. Apart from these regular recommended prayers, there are several others which the Prophet offered and we do well to do the same, but these he offered less regularly.

[39] Ibn Umm `Abd is an endearing way that the Prophet used only when referring to `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud.

sleeping one. There were always some poor Muslims sleeping in the mosque. He would pray in the mosque before entering his home.

When he went home and wanted to sleep, he would take a piece of cloth that was placed at the top of his bed and he would cover himself with it from the waist downwards. He then undressed, hanging his two robes, and joined his wife under their bed covers. His bed was a mattress of hide filled with fibre, and his pillow, which he shared with his wife, was of the same material. When he went to bed, he would put his tooth stick near his pillow to use it when he woke up. Whenever he woke up, whether he was asleep in the day or night, he would start with brushing his teeth. When he brushed his teeth, he would give his tooth stick to `A'ishah to wash it, but she would use it first to brush her teeth so that she would have some of his blessed saliva, then she would wash it and give it back to him. He always had his tooth stick close at hand, so that he would always clean his mouth. In fact, he feared that he might lose some of his teeth because of too much brushing. It seems that he wanted his mouth to always be very clean, as he used to speak to the angels. Hence, he did not eat beans and vegetables that had strong smells. If he was asked about this, he would say: "I feel shy with God's angels. These are not forbidden to eat, but I speak to those you do not speak to." Hence, he wanted his tooth stick close to him, so that he would start with brushing his teeth when he woke up, and he kept it close to him when he went to sleep.

The Prophet would speak to his wife for a short while. We may imagine the sort of conversation between a loving and noble husband and his longing and loving wife in the quiet night. It is a conversation that imparted love and happiness, and added to the depth of the spiritual bond between the couple.

After this beautiful pillow talk, if he felt a man's need to his wife, they would have intercourse. If his wife was in her period, that would not deprive her of pleasure. He would tell his wife to wrap her waist well and they would have foreplay,[40] but remain short of intercourse. Needless to say, this gives the wife a feeling that she is

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[40] In Islam, intercourse between man and wife is prohibited during her period, but all hugging, kissing and foreplay are permissible.

wanted and that the natural barrier that prevents intercourse does not stop a married couple from being close and intimate. Umm Salamah reports: "I was with God's messenger in bed when I started my period. I crept out from under the bed covers. The Prophet asked me: "Are you in menstruation?" I said: "I have the period that women have." He said: "This is something God has applied to all women." I crept out and did what was necessary and came back. The Prophet said to me: "Come close and be with me under the cover." He actually drew me closer under his cover.

He would normally have his grand ablution, i.e. *ghusl*, before going to sleep. Alternatively, he would have ablution, i.e. *wudu'*,, and go to sleep, leaving his grand ablution to the time when he woke up. Sometimes, both he and his wife used the same water container to have their grand ablution, dipping their hands in it. She would say to him, 'leave me some', and he would say the same to her. This is again an example of the intimate and pleasant relationship between the Prophet and his wives.

When he lied in bed, he said: "All praise be to God who has given us food and drink in plenty, and given us shelter. Many are those who have neither enough provisions nor shelter. All praise be to God who has bestowed on me of His grace, and granted me abundant favours. Praise be to God in all situations. My Lord, the Lord of all, the Owner of all, the God of all, to You everything belongs. I seek Your protection from the Fire." He then cupped his two hands and blew in them and read the last three short surahs of the Qur'an[41] before wiping with his hands his head, face and the front part of his body. He repeated this three times.

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[41] These are Surahs 112-114: "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful! Say: He is God, the One and only God, the Eternal, the Absolute. He begets none, nor is He begotten, and there is nothing that could be compared to Him." (112: 1-4) "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful! Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak, from the evil of anything that He has created; from the evil of darkness when it gathers; from the evil of the conjuring witches; from the evil of the envious when he envies." (113: 1-5) "In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful! Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind, from the mischief of the slinking prompter, who whispers in the hearts of mankind, from among jinn and mankind." (114: 1-6)

In bed, the Prophet lied on his right side and placed his right hand under his right cheek. He also said: "My Lord, by Your name I die and by Your name I live.[42] My Lord, spare me Your punishment on the day when You resurrect Your servants." "In the name of God I put down my side. My Lord, forgive me my sins, humiliate my satan,[43] release me of my bondage, add to the good weight in my scales, and include me among those whom You place with the Supreme Companion."[44]

The Prophet also used to say some supplications when he went to bed. Here are a few examples: "My Lord, the Lord of the seven heavens, the Lord of the earth, the Lord of the Great Throne, our Lord and the Lord of all, who splits the grain and the fruit-stone, who revealed the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an! I appeal to You for shelter against the evil of any wicked one whose forehead is in Your hand. My Lord, You are the First and there is none before You, the Last and there is none after You; You are the Outer and there is none above You, the Inner and there is none below You. Repay our debts and save us from poverty." "My Lord, I surrender myself to You, turn my face to You, trust all my affairs to You. By You my back is protected. I make my appeal in fear of You and hope in You. There is no refuge or escape from You except to You. I believe in Your book that You have revealed and in the Prophet You have sent." He might also read some surhs of the Qur'an, such as Surah 32, or Surah 67, or Surah 39, or Surah 17.

He then slept. When he was fast asleep, his breathing would be audible. If he turned in bed during the night, he would say: "There is no deity other than God, the One who conquers all, the Lord of the heaven and the earth and all in between, the Almighty, the All-Forgiving."

Whenever he turned in bed at night, he would pick up his tooth stick and rub his mouth with it before going back to sleep. He would remain asleep until midnight. It seems that this was the longest period of sleep the Prophet had.

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[42] This should be understood in the light of the concept that sleep is a form of death and waking up is a form of resurrection.

[43] This refers to the concept that with every human being there is a satan tempting him or her to turn away from the right faith.

[44] The Supreme Companion refers to God as He is to whom we all shall return.

In the Depth of the Night

When it was midnight or shortly before or after it, the Prophet would wake up. He would sit up and rub his face with his hand to wipe off the effect of sleep. He would take his tooth stick and clean his blessed mouth. He would then lift his eyes to the sky, contemplating in the total silence of the night God's greatness as it is manifested in His creation. As he did that, he read these verses of the Qur'an:

> In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed signs for men endowed with insight, who remember God when they stand, sit and lie down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. Limitless are You in Your glory. Guard us, then, against the torment of the fire. Our Lord, him whom You shall commit to the fire, You will have condemned to disgrace. The evildoers shall have none to help them. Our Lord, we have heard the voice of one who calls to faith, [saying], 'Believe in your Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us, then, our sins and efface our bad deeds and let us die with the truly virtuous. Our Lord, grant us what You have promised us through Your messengers, and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, You never fail to fulfil Your promise.
>
> Their Lord answers them: "I will not suffer the work of any worker among you, male or female, to be lost. Each of you is an issue of the other. Therefore, those who emigrate and are driven out of their homes and suffer persecution in My cause, and fight and are slain [for it] - I shall indeed efface their bad deeds and admit them to gardens through which running waters flow, as a reward from God. With God is the best of rewards. Let not the disbelievers' prosperity in the land deceive you. It is but a brief enjoyment. Then, hell shall be their abode. What an evil abode! As for those who fear their Lord, theirs shall be gardens through which

> running waters flow, in which they shall abide, a gift of welcome from God. That which is with God is best for the truly virtuous. There are indeed among the people of earlier revelations some who believe in God and in what has been bestowed from on high upon you and in what has been bestowed upon them, humbling themselves before God. They do not barter away God's revelations for a trifling price. They shall have their reward with their Lord. Swift is God's reckoning. Believers, be patient in adversity, and let your patience never be exhausted, be ever ready and fear God so that you may prosper. (3: 190-200)

The Prophet then rose and took a hanging waterskin. He opened it and poured some water into a jug he had. Then he performed the ablution fully but making sure to economize in the use of water. He then put on his two robes and took off the cloth with which he wrapped his waist. He then started his night prayer.

He might say some glorifications of God and supplications before starting his night prayer in order to put himself fully in the atmosphere of night worship. `A'ishah reports that when the Prophet woke up he would repeat these phrases ten times: *Allah akbar* 'God is supreme'; *Alhamd lillah* 'All praise be to God'; *Subhan Allah wa bihamdih* 'Limitless is God in His glory, the Praised One'; *Subhan al-Malik al-Quddus* 'Limitless in His glory is the Sovereign, the Holy One'; *Astaghfiru Allah* 'I seek God's forgiveness'; *La ilah illa Allah* 'there is no deity other than God'. He would then say ten times: "My Lord, I seek refuge with You from the narrowness of this world and from tightness on the Day of Resurrection." He then started his prayers.

He started his night prayers with two light and short *rak`ahs*. The Prophet kept his prayers short when he led a congregation, but when he prayed alone, his prayer was longer than all people. In fact, his night prayer was the longest he offered in all aspects, the start, the Qur'anic recitation and the supplication. This he did in compliance with God's instruction to him: "Stand in prayer at night, all but a small part of it." (73: 2) When we look carefully at his night prayer we feel that he was fully absorbed in his prayer. All his feelings, sensation and address were focused on it, as if his spirit

moved up to the Highest Society to give him the light that comes from God. He seems to be looking at God's Throne and speaking to Him in a one-to-one situation. His praise of his Lord is the most expressive and his gratitude is the greatest people feel. His supplication sums up all that people pray for. There is no wonder. He was the one who went on the night journey, when the gates of the seven heavens were opened to him. He rose to a level where he heard the divine pens as they wrote down what was going to happen.

Prophet Muhammad had the best knowledge of God, the most perfect belief and the most certain of what he believed in. He spoke the clear truth when he said: "I am the one who is most God fearing and who knows God best among you."

He would start his prayer as one who glorifies his Lord, loves Him and aspires to be with Him. His opening of the prayer, therefore, was with the most expressive phrases of glorification and praise, such as: "My Lord, the Lord of Gabriel, Michael and Israfil, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, You have full knowledge of what is witnessed and what is imperceptible. You are the arbiter between Your servants on all that they differed. Guide me, with Your permission, to the right course concerning which people differ. You are the One who guides whomever He pleases to the right path."

Another example of the supplications with which he started his prayer runs as follows: "Our Lord, all praise is due to You. You are the light of the heavens and the earth and all creatures therein. All praise is due to You. You are the Master of the heavens and the earth and all creatures therein. All praise is due to You. You are the King of the heavens and the earth and all creatures therein. All praise is due to You. You are the truth; Your promise is true; the meeting with You is true; Your word is true; heaven is true; hell is true; the prophets are true; Muhammad is true; and the Last Hour is true. My Lord to You I submit myself; in You I believe; on You I rely; to You I return; over You I dispute; to You I resort for decision; forgive me what I committed in the past and what I may commit in future; what I committed in private or in public and what You know better than I. You are the One who puts forward and

who puts back. There is no deity other than You. No power operates except with Your permission."

Yet another opening supplication was: "I have turned my face with pure and complete devotion to Him who brought the heavens and the earth into being. I am not one of those who associate partners with God. My prayers, my worship, my living and my dying are for God alone, the Lord of all worlds. He has no partners. Thus have I been commanded, and I am one of those who surrender themselves to Him. My Lord, You are the King; there is no deity other than You. You are my Lord and I am Your servant. I have wronged myself and I acknowledge my sin; forgive me all my sins, for none forgives sin except You. Guide me to the best manners, for none guides to the best manners except You. Keep me away from the worst manners, for none turns away from them except You. I respond to You. All goodness is in Your hand, and evil is not Yours. I live by You and to You. Blessed and glorified You are. I seek Your forgiveness and to You I turn in repentance."

In his night prayer, the Prophet used to recite the Qur'an clearly and with a slow pace. Whenever he read a verse that spoke of God's mercy, he would pray for mercy, and when he read a verse that mentioned punishment, he would appeal to God to spare him that, and when he read a verse that affirmed God's glory, he would glorify God.

When he stood for night prayer, he would make his prayer long. `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud reports: "I prayed with God's messenger one night, and he continued standing for so long that I was about to do something rude." People asked him what he was about to do. He said: "I thought of sitting down and leave the Prophet." The Prophet might recite long surahs of the Qur'an in his night prayer, praying only a small number of *rak`ahs.* His night prayers were never more than 13 *rak`ahs.* When he bowed, his *ruku`* was nearly as long as his standing up. He said in his *ruku`*: "My Lord, to You I bow; in You I believe; to You I surrender myself; on You I rely. You are my Lord. My sight, hearing, flesh, blood, brain, bones, nerves and my step submit to God, the Lord of all the worlds. All glory belongs to the Almighty, the Supreme. Glorified and Holy is the Lord of the angels and the spirit."

Towards the end of his life, he used to frequently say in his *ruku`* and prostration: "All glory belong to You, our Lord, and all praise. My Lord, forgive me." `A'ishah asked him why he did so. He said: "My Lord told me that I would be seeing a clear signal in my community, and that when I saw it, I should say 'All glory be to God and all praise. I seek God's forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance'. I have seen it: 'When God's help and victory come, and you see people embracing God's religion in large numbers then extol your Lord's limitless glory, and praise Him, and seek His forgiveness. He is the One who accepts repentance.'" (110: 1-3) This was a signal that his life was approaching its end when he would be gathered to God, the Supreme Companion.

His prostration, i.e. *sujud*, was nearly as long as his *ruku`*. During his prostration he would say all types of supplication. He told us: "A human being is closest to God when he is in prostration; therefore, say much supplication when prostrated." During his prostration, he would say: "My Lord, to You I prostrate myself; in You I believe; to You I surrender myself; You are my Lord. My face is prostrated to the One who created it, fashioned it, giving it a comely appearance and placed in it sight and hearing. Exalted be God, the best of creators. My Lord, forgive me all my sins: major and minor, old and new, public and private. My Lord, I appeal to You to grant me Your pleasure rather than displeasure, Your pardon rather than punishment. I seek refuge with You against Your punishment. I cannot praise You enough; I praise You as You have praised Yourself. Glorified and Holy is the Lord of the angels and the spirit."

What a noble person Prophet Muhammad was. He addressed his Lord alone in the deep silence of the night, repeating his praises of Him, glorifying Him, asserting His Godhead and Lordship and humbling himself before Him. To what sublime horizon did Muhammad's spirit yearn and rise as he said these glorifications and devoted himself wholeheartedly to Him. We can imagine that all the mountains on earth listened to him, and the stars in the sky were watching him. Then they would whisper to one another that this was the man who was told in God's revelations: "Remember your Lord's name and devote yourself wholeheartedly to Him." (73: 8)

Prophet Muhammad continued to spend his night time reading the Qur'an with devotion, saying a passionate appeal to God and repeating heart-felt glorifications until only one-sixth of the night remained. He would have then completed his night prayer and only the *witr* prayer remained.[45] He would then wake up his wife so that she would pray *witr* with him. He prayed the *witr* in three *rak`ahs*, reading Surah 87 in the first, Surah 109 in the second and Surah 112 in the third. He might occasionally add Surahs 113 and 114 in the third *rak`ah*. At the end of his *witr* prayer, he would say: "My Lord, I appeal to You to grant me Your pleasure rather than displeasure, Your pardon rather than punishment. I seek refuge with You against Your punishment. I cannot reckon Your favours; nor can I praise You enough; I praise You as You have praised Yourself. Glorified and Holy is the Lord of the angels and the spirit." When he finished *witr*, he would say: "All glory belongs to the King, the Holy." He repeated it three times, making the third one longer.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) prayed at night in his room which had nothing of the comforts of easy living. He might pray on a small straw mat or he prayed with nothing to prostrate on other than his wife's mattress. He would pray and she would be sleeping in front of him. There were no lights at home at the time. When he prayed, he would touch his wife and she would pull her leg away. When he stood up, she stretched her leg again.

On odd occasions, the Prophet might go out to offer his night worship in the mosque. Perhaps he did so for something that might have occurred. I think he might have feared to wake up his wife, if she was fast asleep. `A'ishah reports: "I missed the Prophet in bed one night, and I went out to look for him. My hand fell on the bottom of his feet as they were raised in the mosque.[46] He was saying: "My Lord, I appeal to You to grant me Your pleasure rather than displeasure, Your pardon rather than punishment. I seek

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[45] The *witr* prayer is a strongly recommended prayer. It should be the last prayer offered at night. It can be offered immediately after Isha prayer or left till later if one intends to offer night worship. It consists usually of three *rak`ahs*, but it could be offered in one *rak`ah* only, especially when a person is travelling. Of all recommended prayers, the Prophet never omitted the two *rak`ahs* before Fajr and the *witr* after Isha.

[46] This means that he was in the position of prostration.

refuge with You against Your punishment. I cannot praise You enough; I praise You as You have praised Yourself."

She also said: "I missed the Prophet one night and I thought that he might have gone to one of his other wives. I sought him and then returned home. I found him in either *ruku`* or prostrating himself and saying: "All glory be to You, my Lord, and all praise. There is no deity other than You." I thought to myself. 'How noble you are, messenger of God. You are preoccupied with something and I am preoccupied with a totally different thing.'"

A Walk in the Depth of the Night

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) might go out towards the end of the night, when it is the best time for night worship, to the home of his daughter Fatimah and her husband `Ali. He would call out to them: "Will you not get up and pray?" `Ali reported that he once said to the Prophet: "Messenger of God, we pray only what has been made obligatory to us. Our souls are in God's hand. If He wishes to bring us alive, He will do so." `Ali added that the Prophet left when he said that and did not speak to him. He then heard that as he left, the Prophet He struck his thigh and said: "We pray only what has been made obligatory to us. 'Man is, above all else, always given to contention.'" (18: 54)

Towards the end of his life, he used to go during the night to the cemetery at al-Baqi` and pray for the dead buried there. The first of these occasions was the one reported by `A'ishah: "When it was the night when the Prophet was staying with me, he turned and put off his top garment, took off his shoes and put them near his feet, placed the edge of his lower garment on bed and lay in bed. He stayed only until he thought I had gone to sleep. He then took his top garment quietly and very quietly put on his shoes, opened the door and went out, then he closed the door without making a sound. I immediately put on my shirt, covered my head, put on my robes and went out following him. He went to al-Baqi` where he stood long, then he lifted his arms three times. He then turned and I turned, walked fast and I walked fast, started to jog and I jogged, and then increased his speed and I did the same. I was faster than him and went in. I was hardly in bed when he entered. He said: 'What is the matter with you, `A'ishah? You seem agitated.' I said there was nothing. He said: 'You shall tell me, or I will be told by God who knows all.' I said: 'Messenger of God, you are dearer to me than all else.' Then I told him all. He said: 'Were you then that blackness I saw ahead of me?' I said I was. He poked me once in the chest hurting me and said: 'Have you thought that God and His messenger might be unfair to you?' I said: 'Whatever people will hide will be known to God. Yes, I did.' He said: 'Gbariel came to me when you saw what I did and called me out, hiding this from you. I answered him and kept that from you. He would not enter

your room when you have taken off your clothes. I felt that you had gone to sleep and I did not wish to wake you up, thinking that you might feel lonely [when I had gone]. He told me God's order to go to al-Baqi` and pray for the forgiveness of those buried there.'"

`A'ishah continues: "I asked him how should I address those in the graves. He said that I should say: 'Peace be to the people of this place who are Muslims and believers. May God bestow mercy on those of us who have gone ahead and those who will go later. We shall, God willing, be joining you.' After that, he used to go out every night towards the end of the night to al-Baqi`. He would say: 'Peace be to you in a place of believing people. You have met what you have been promised. You are awaiting the morrow. We shall join you, God willing. My Lord, forgive the people in Baqi` al-Gharqad.'"

How admirable this Prophet was when he went out quietly in the depth of the night and stood before the graves of his companions who had died without seeing the great victory of Islam when people started to embrace it in flocks. They went to their Lord when the Muslim community was still small in number, going through hardship and facing the determined onslaught of their enemies. They passed away, having received no reward in this present life.

At that time, the Prophet was receiving delegation after delegation from all over Arabia. Yet, neither these delegations nor the expansion of the area of Islam prevented him from thinking about those that had gone ahead. He dedicated a part of the time of his rest to stand before their graves, remembering their faces and raising his arms to pray for them.

At the time, the Prophet was about to bid his final farewell to this present life. He was bidding farewell to both the dead and the living in readiness to go to the Supreme Companion.

A Nap before Dawn

When the night hours had passed and there remained only the last part of it, just about one-sixth of it, the Prophet would then go again to bed, to rest his body after a long night spent in prayer, supplication, glorification of God, showing care for the close relatives and the departed companions. He would have just a short nap to prepare himself for the Fajr, i.e. dawn, prayer and the business of the day. Thus, the hour at the break of dawn is passed with the Prophet fast asleep. `A'ishah, the mother of all believers, says: "Whenever the Prophet was with me at night, he would be asleep at the break of dawn."

The Prophet enjoyed this nap until the light of dawn has penetrated the darkness of the night when Bilal would make the *adhan* for Fajr prayer, breaking the stillness of Madinah. The Prophet was awakened by the *adhan* to start a new day that was blessed with the air of prophethood, enlightened by the light of the Islamic message.

Reading the Prophet's Day

The Prophet's day represents a cross section of his expansive life. It provides a host of profound revelations:

1. The Prophet looked at his day as the time framework for his achievements. Human history has never witnessed anything approaching the achievements of God's great messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him).

2. The first thing that captures attention in the Prophet's daily life is its superior clarity that shines all the time. There were no dark corners or missing chains in his life. Everything in it was clear and transparent. We know what he did at home, when he closed his door, how he lay in his bed, what he did with his wife at sleeping time and we hear his breathing when he was asleep and the first thing he said when he woke up.

As I was studying the daily programme of the Prophet, I felt that I know about him more than I know about my own father. His was a shining life; he was a Prophet walking under the sun.

3. In following his day, you see in practice the meaning of his statement: "Prayer is the apple of my eye." Prayer, obligatory, voluntary or night worship, is clearly apparent throughout his day. It represents the stops that give psychological comfort throughout the day. He appears to receive through his prayer what God bestows on him of added strength and blessings. Thus, after each prayer his strength of resolve is renewed and greatly enhanced. Prayer was the source of strength and comfort for him. He seemed to want it now whenever it was due. He said to Bilal, expressing his longing to it: "Bilal, give us the comfort of prayer." Perhaps nothing expresses more clearly and accurately how he spiritually longed to it than his words, 'give us its comfort'. That indicates perfect communion between him and the Creator.

Ibn al-Qayyim mentions that the total of his regular prayers in his day and night was 40 *rak`ahs*, which he always maintained. These were divided into 17 obligatory *rak`ahs*, 10 or 12 regular voluntary *rak`ahs* and 11 or 13 in night worship. Any extras were not regular. These extras could be a prayer in midmorning, or one

at the place of a person he is visiting, or one offered in greeting to the mosque. A Muslim will do very well to maintain this figure throughout his life. Imagine that you are knocking at a door 40 times every day and night: could there be a speedier response or a quicker opening of the door?

4. His night worship was the most absorbing that gave him most enjoyment of addressing his Lord. It was a case of profound spiritual experience.

5. You cannot help being extremely amazed that the Prophet who was assured that God had forgiven him all his sins, past and future, was always appealing to God to forgive him. He started his day with requesting God's forgiveness 100 times. In one session with them, his companions counted that he said more than 100 times, 'My Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance; You alone are the One who accepts repentance and forgive all." In his night worship, he again sought his Lord forgiveness with passionate appeal, saying: "My Lord, forgive me what I committed in the past and what I may commit in future; what I committed in private or in public and what You know better than I. You are the One who puts forward and who puts back. There is no deity other than You. No power operates except with Your permission."

He appealed so much for forgiveness when he was assured by God that He had forgiven him all his sins, past and future; when he was the one who was protected from all sin. What should we say about ourselves when we can hardly escape a slip or even a deliberate sin? Our Lord, forgive us.

6. The Prophet was always mentioning God and glorifying Him. You feel that the love of God and the aspiration to be with Him was at the centre of his life. He seemed to see the majesty of his Lord and, therefore, he never stopped praising Him. The first thing he says when he wakes up is to praise God and the last thing he utters before going to sleep is a supplication to God. He starts his mornings and evenings with extolling God's praises, and he is always repeating these in between. That is a situation of profound awareness of the meanings of love of God, servitude to Him and recognition of His great attributes.

7. The Prophet was always keen to offer the obligatory prayers at the beginning of their time, except Isha, which he sometimes delayed.

8. The Prophet normally spoke to his companions after the obligatory prayers, and mostly after Fajr and Zuhr, because people were fresh and alert at these times. These two prayers were preceded by the night sleep and the daily nap in mid-morning. He rarely spoke to his companions after Asr and Isha because people were normally tired at these times and needed their rest. He was not reported to have talked to them after Maghrib, because people needed to have their dinner. Therefore, he offered it at the beginning of its time, making it short and did not follow it by an address to his companions.

9. The Prophet maintained proper balance in all his activities: the fulfilment of duties, attending to life requirements, offering worship, delivering God's message, looking after his family, taking care of his companions, looking after himself and all other demands on his time. He attended to all these in a well balanced way. You do not see in his life any neglect of a duty or failure to do what is right. You only see a well balanced attention to all private and public duties. You see in his life how he implemented what he urged everyone to do: "Your body has a rightful claim against you; your eyes have a rightful claim against you; your wife has a rightful claim against you; your guest has a rightful claim against you; your children have rightful claims against you and your friend has a rightful claim against you." In his life, he was a model of giving everyone their rights.

10. The Prophet's life was full of activity, but was never tense or confused. Numerous as the claims on his time were and vying for attention, he was always calm and relaxed. Little or non-existent tension was in his life. He was never at a loss. When you saw him attending to something, you would think that he had nothing to do before it and nothing to do after it. The way he was at home gave no hint that heavy burdens awaited him outside. If you saw him with his companions you had no indication that he was anxious about anything else awaiting his attention. He attended to them fully and was relaxed as he talked to them. His refined manners were felt by them all. It was like he had no business other than

meeting his companions and attending to their needs. His was a situation of perfect equilibrium that approached all tasks with ease and comfort.

11. His life was orderly, but not monotonous. There was enough flexibility to attend to changing circumstances. Chaos and confusion were unknown in his life; nor were rigidity and dullness. The combination of order and flexibility was helped by the obligatory prayers. These had fixed times that helped to organize what might be accomplished in between. His meetings with his companions might be long or short as the situation required. Thus he was able to benefit by the positives of organization and get rid of the negatives of monotony and rigidity.

12. We cannot fail to notice the spontaneity and simplicity in the Prophet's life. Affected seriousness and strict rigidity were alien to him, while spontaneity was his nature. He shared in what was delightful, loved companionship, and was eager to show his pleasure with whatever gave pleasure. He would hurry to meet someone he loved arriving after a long absence, and in his hurry, his top robe fell off his shoulders. He might be going along his way when he would move aside to speak to a young man skinning a slaughtered sheep. He rolled up his sleeve to show the young man how to do the skinning properly. He might pass by someone who was cooking meat and would ask him whether his food was already cooked. He would take a bite and eat it.

Such spontaneity in dealing with people removed all barriers. He was thus able to have a heart-to-heart relationship with his companions. They felt themselves like children looking up to their father.

13. Pleasure and entertainment were present in his home, meetings and in his life generally. At home, he was always smiling and laughing. In his meetings there was always room for a light joke and pleasant conversation. He came out of his home to watch the Abyssinians do their folk dancing in the mosque. He enjoyed that and called his wife to share in the occasion. He established this principle, saying to the Abyssinians: "Carry on with your play, Bani Arfidah, so that the Jews and the Christians will know that our faith accommodates all. I have been given a pure and lenient message."

His faith was certainly lenient and his life allowed enough room for pleasure and entertainment.

14. We also note that his family life was characterised by strong emotions. This was manifested in simple actions, such as handing over a glass of water, putting a bite in his wife's mouth, love conversation at night, caring visits during the day, attending to his family's needs and the intimate contact in bed, under its covers.

15. The Prophet showed great understanding of people's nature, needs and business. This was reflected even in his approach to worship. When he led a congregation, his prayer was short, but when he prayed alone, his was the longest of prayers. He might start a congregational prayer, intending to make it long, but he hears a child crying and he makes his prayer short, as a compassionate gesture to the mother who must be anxious for her child.

16. When we study how the Prophet spent his day we realize that his most profound worship in which he was fully absorbed was that he did alone in the privacy of his home, in the depth of the night. He practised this night worship throughout his life.

This is, in fact, one of the proofs of his prophethood. Such regular devotion which the Prophet practised throughout his life could have never been put on by an imposter. It is a proof of profound faith and firm conviction of the truth of what he preached and delivered.

17. We may identify three periods of activity:

i. The period of calm freshness and vitality in the depth of the night. The Prophet performed his night worship after the longest period of sleep he had in a 24-hour day. This period of sleep was during the first half of the night. He seemed to ensure his freshness for this activity, because to him prayer was the best of comforts and the apple of his eye.

ii. After Fajr prayer. This was the period that followed his nap at dawn. He offered the obligatory Fajr prayer, extolled the praises of God, glorified Him and sat with his companions instructing and admonishing them.

iii. After Zuhr prayer. Again this occured after the mid-morning nap. He prayed Zuhr and addressed his companions about anything that might have happened, or sat with them attending to their needs.

18. The daily prayers were clearly the points of time demarcation. The day was divided into time units separated by these prayers. We may identify the following programme of the day in Prophet Muhammad's life:

a) Fajr. The Prophet woke up after his dawn nap, offered Fajr prayer with the congregation of his companions, then sat with them in the mosque until sunrise. He then went on his morning round to see his wives. After that, i.e. early in the morning, he sat in the mosque with his companions in a session of instruction and education. He sometimes paid some visits after this session. He might visit his daughters, or some of his companions, or attended to some business of his own. After mid-morning, it was time for the day nap. He would have his nap before the Zuhr prayer, to rest his body and to be ready for his night activity.

b) Zuhr. He woke up for the prayer and offered it with the congregation. If something had happened, he would address his companions after Zuhr prayer. Most of his speeches were given at this time. He returned to his home to pray the regular voluntary prayer. He then came out and sat with his companions. Alternatively, he would go to attend to some business. The time between the Zuhr and Asr prayers was a time of work and attending to needs.

c) Asr. The Prophet prayed Asr early, and then he made his evening round, visiting each one of his wives. All of them might gather in the home of the one whose turn was on that day. Apparently, the time between Asr and Maghrib was largely a time of relaxation with the family.

d) Maghrib. The Prophet offered Maghrib prayer early, then had his dinner. This was the time when he had his main meal of the day.

e) Isha. He offered Isha prayer with the congregation before returning home. He sat for a while with his family, or might go to visit some of his Ansari companions, or spend some time with Abu Bakr and `Umar in Abu Bakr's home, discussing the affairs of the state and the community. After such visits, he returned home and slept until midnight. He then woke up for his night worship. At this time, he was at his freshest after the longest period of sleep in his day. He spent approximately one-third of the night in prayer and supplication. When only one-sixth of the night remained, he went back to bed for rest. This was the dawn nap which lasted until it was time for Fajr prayer.

19. The events of his daily life were just another scene confirming the fact that he was God's prophet. No one could watch him without realizing that his was the conduct of a messenger of God who received revelations form on high. Everyone who observed him concluded that he neither made a false claim nor sought any personal gain. Thumamah ibn Uthal was taken captive and brought to Madinah by the Muslims. To him, the Prophet was the person he hated most. The Prophet ordered him to be tied to a post in the mosque. When Thumamah saw what the Prophet did in his day and night, and saw him coming and going, and how he treated the people around him, he realized that Muhammad was neither a king nor a dictator. He concluded that he was a messenger of God. Having kept him in this position for a couple of days, the Prophet then ordered him to be released, leaving him free to decide what he wanted to do. Thumamah simply went away, took a bath and came back. He sat in front of the Prophet and said: "I bear witness that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's messenger. By God, Muhammad, there was no face on earth I hated more than your face. Now your face is the one I love most. There was no religion I hated more than your religion. Now your religion is the one I love most. There was no town I hated more than your town. Now it is the one I love most."

Similar was the conclusion arrived at by `Adiy ibn Hatim who was the chief of his tribe and a Christian. As he was walking with the Prophet a woman who had a child with her called out to the

Prophet. `Adiy said: "They spoke to him privately as he stood with them. They continued for a long time until I moved towards him. I thought: 'I am certain that you are no follower of my religion or the religion of al-Nu`man ibn al-Mundhir. Had you been a king, no boy and woman could have stopped you as long as this. I felt my heart warming to him." `Adiy embraced Islam shortly after that.

20. His daily programme shows that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) led a very happy and blessed life.

The happiness he derived from faith was of a very high standard which no other person ever achieved. He was the man who knew God best, believed in him as no one else did.

On his night journey, he was raised above the seven heavens to a level where he could hear the pens of destiny as they wrote down whatever God ordered. He saw heaven with his own eyes, and wanted to take some of its fruit. He also saw al-Kawthar, a stream in heaven. He discovered that its mud was pure musk and its pebbles were pearls.

Can we imagine what feelings such a prophet would have when he was raised to such a sublime status and how he would pray to his Lord, glorify Him and extol His praises? It is he who said: "I stay with my Lord who feeds me and gives me to drink." It is not possible to compare his pleasure when he offered his worship or the sweetness of faith he felt to any pleasures or feeling of happiness in our world.

Yet he was happy in his life in this world. We sense this happiness in all aspects of his life. We feel his appreciation of this happiness and his profound gratitude to God for it. It was God who spared him anxiety and sorrow and protected him from terrible illness. He thus lived in good physical and mental health, enjoying a happy family life. His life was characterised by permanent and total wellbeing. He had the pretty wife who reciprocated his love. He shared with her the purest feelings of love and affection. He had the pure daughter and her two sons who were the greatest blessings in his worldly life. To them he devoted the sweetest parental feelings. He had the truest of companions, Abu Bakr and `Umar. He shared with them all life burdens. He often said: "I entered with Abu Bakr and `Umar; I walked with Abu Bakr and `Umar; and I went with Abu Bakr and `Umar." He had a

son-in-law who was a close relative and lived close to him. He loved this son-in-law, `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and he knew that God also loved him. He had other sons-in-law who were faithful to him. They were true in whatever they said to him and fulfilled whatever they promised him. These were `Uthman ibn `Affan and Abu al-`As ibn al-Rabi`. He had his faithful companions. Divine revelations were given to him commending their faithfulness and what they felt at heart: "God knew what was in their hearts and so He sent down tranquillity upon them." (48: 18) Thus, he was most happy with those who were with and around him.

He lived a life in which achievements followed one another in quick succession. The greatest happiness in life is that generated by achievement. He then fulfilled his greatest goal in life, which was the delivery of God's message, and saw people embracing the divine faith in large groups.

I cannot begin to imagine the happiness the Prophet felt as he saw the congregation in his mosque increasing, and as he saw Islam spreading on earth and people in large numbers declaring their acceptance of Islam. Indeed I cannot describe my own feelings as I try to imagine his feelings on his farewell pilgrimage, when he saw those multitudes who came from all over Arabia declaring to him in one voice: "We bear witness that you have delivered God's message, gave good counsel and fulfilled your assignment."

All this was just some of the abundance God gave him. It is He who said to him: "Certainly, in time your Lord will be bounteous to you and you will be well pleased." (93: 5)

21. We find in his life the appreciation of life's pleasures, the enjoyment of beauty, the gratitude to God for having given him such favours. After a drink he tastes or a bite he eats, he expresses his profound gratitude to God, saying: "Praise be to God, much wholesome and blessed praise. Praise be to God who has given us plenty to eat and much to drink. Our Lord cannot be rewarded or met with ingratitude. We neither turn away from Him nor deny our need of His favours. Our Lord, You are the One who has given us food and drink, riches and possessions, provided us with guidance and life. To You all praise is due for all that You have given us."

When he wakes up, he appreciates that God has granted him a good sleep, often craved by those who find sleeping difficult. He

wakes up full of energy and remembers that it is all granted by the grace of God. He immediately says: "All praise be to God who has given us life after he has made us lifeless. To Him we shall all return."

If this is what he says and feels after the usual meal or sleep, the pleasure of which is made very ordinary by familiarity, we can imagine what he felt at having renewed and successive favours. We realize that he pauses at every favour to appreciate it fully and expresses gratitude for the grace God has shown him by granting it to him. We almost hear him addressing his Lord, saying: "All praise be to God who has bestowed on me of His grace, and granted me abundant favours. Praise be to God in all situations."

The Prophet draws our attention to the great value of what is so familiar to us that we almost do not feel: security at night, the day's food and good health. He says: "Whoever wakes up in security, enjoying good health and having his day's food is like one who enjoys all that the world can give." How much do we think he appreciated all this and what was more?

To feel the grace of God and the blessings and favours He has given increases their pleasure and our happiness at having them. It makes life far more pleasant and happier, and reassures us so that we are more satisfied and better grateful to the One who has given us all this by His grace. Thus, one favour brings others and life becomes happier, more shining and far more productive.

22. Let us look, through this daily programme, at the Prophet's very busy life and contemplate his cheerful interaction with life. Then let us remember the great sorrows that the Prophet experienced in his own life and was able to bypass. As a child he experienced repeated bereavement, losing both his parents and grandfather. After he was given his message, he was exposed to a campaign of persecution, then he lost his best love, Khadijah, his first wife. During his lifetime, he lost six of his children. He was forced to leave his hometown which was the town he loved most. He lost many of his dearest relatives and companions in the Battle of Uhud. He was profoundly hurt when the story of falsehood, accusing his most beloved and innocent wife of adultery. He had to endure many more painful events.

Yet despite all this, he had great ability to overcome negative feelings and strong vitality to resume life, interacting positively with every fresh moment.

When we look at the richness of every day of his life, we will almost say that his was the conduct of a person who never experienced a hardship or a trial. He certainly was not such a person, but he was able to overcome pain in all its aspects. Every moment of his life had its goal and achievement. Hence, it had its pleasure. He was thus able to live an ever-renewing and ever-flowing life. He lived life as it should be lived.

23. We wonder at the Prophet's sincere and pronounced presence in the life of his companions and his vigorous interaction with them. We can almost say that every single one of them had some special story or interaction with the Prophet. He received their newborn children, taking them on his lap. The first thing they tasted was his saliva and his blessings. Their servants crowd at his mosque with the first light of day, seeking his blessing, and he dips his blessed hand in their jugs and water containers. Their young boys and girls meet him in the street and he wipes their faces and declares how much he loves them. He sprinkles water in the face of a young boy, and dresses a young girl with a colourful garment, and lights up every child's life with a pleasant memory. When they met him, he received them with a beaming smile and their hands received his blessed hand with its splendid smell. He walked to their houses and shared their food. He joined in their pleasures and they were all the happier for his presence. They invited him to attend their event as they wanted to slaughter a camel for food. He came, looked and waited with them. He watched the Abyssinian delegation as they did their folk dances in his mosque and he made clear to them his delight, saying: "Carry on with your play, Bani Arfidah." He visited those who were sick. When they woke up they found him looking at them and his cool hand wiping over their pain. He walked in their funerals and stood by the graves of their loved ones. He wept sharing their sorrows. When they went away he missed them. They were informed that he enquired about them. Thus, his life extended into theirs. Their life was enlightened with his profound presence and remarkable interaction.

When the Prophet died, he remained present in their thoughts, alive in their hearts, shining in their eyes. Everyone had with him an unforgettable memory. When they spoke about him, you feel that they could almost see him there and then. You hear them saying: "I can almost see the brightness of his legs..."; "As if I am now seeing the glitter of his ring..."; "I can almost see the brilliance of the perfume on his forehead..."; "I can still feel the coldness of his hand..."; "His hand was cooler than ice and better smelling than musk..."; "I feel now as if the coolness of his foot on my hand..."

24. To go on a journey with the Prophet witnessing the events of his day generates increased love of his noble soul in our hearts. No wonder that his companions loved and respected him as no one loves and respects another. Indeed, everything they saw in his life filled their hearts with more love and respect to him. Every detail in his life earned more respect and stronger attraction. We cannot live what they lived through, but we certainly can learn it. The more we look at and contemplate what the Prophet's companions saw and heard from God's messenger, the closer we are to love him as they loved him. To be in company with the Prophet in the details of his full day enriches his love in our hearts. He is the one who the better you know the more you love, and the more you learn about him the stronger you hope to see.

Very often I contemplated certain stories of his life and I felt the time gap bridged so as to see the event taking place in front of me. I felt close to him and almost submerged in his light. It was like I was smelling the air he breathed. I would wish to bow and kiss his hand and feel the coolness of his palm. I wanted to say from the depth of my heart: By God, I love you, messenger of God, more than I love myself.

Our Lord, we believe in Your messenger, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and we follow him without having seen him. Our Lord, do not deprive us of seeing him on the Day of Judgement. Resurrect us among his followers and include us among those for whom he will intercede with You. Let us drink of his fountain and be in his company in the highest heaven, along with those upon whom You will bestow Your grace: the Prophet, and those who never deviate from the truth, and the martyrs and the righteous ones. How goodly a company theirs is!

Our Lord, we believe in what You have bestowed from on high, and we follow the messenger, so write us down among those who bear witness [to the truth].

Our Lord, bestow peace and blessings on Muhammad and Muhammad's household just as You bestowed peace and blessings on Abraham and Abraham's household. You are the One worthy of all praise, the Glorious.

This Book's Methodology

1. The idea of writing this book was first conceived about 20 years ago, in an ordinary discussion between me and my late friend and brother Abd al-Aziz al-Majid (may God bless his soul). The idea came from him, and I remember his word, 'the complete day of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)', and his signal with his hand as he mentioned that the servants of Madinah used to come to him with their water and he would dip his hand in it to bless it. This scene and his words remained with me. I do remember the time and place as if it is happening now. May God enter this in his record under 'contribution to knowledge that remains useful after the departure of its contributor.' May God grant him the best reward he gives for brotherly advice.

2. The idea continued to ferment in my mind and I started to pick up its features and details. I worked on organizing these and placing each at the most suitable point in the Prophet's daily programme. I then wrote a short version of 'the Prophet's day' and sent it to my teachers and brothers mentioned in the Acknowledgements. I benefited greatly from their remarks, observations and corrections. All that they suggested has been taken up in the book. May God give them His best reward.

3. The aim of this book is to present a complete scene of the daily programme of the Prophet's life. It will thus be possible for us to identify the points which we need to emulate, so that we take from his life what will set our life on the right track: "In God's Messenger you have a good model for everyone who looks with hope to God and the Last Day." (33: 21) We will find in the progress of the Prophet's day and the events of his life what is perfectly consistent with human experience in its broadest context and common aspects. Thus all people can see the example that is closest to the sublime and yet very human and practical: "Say: Limitless in His glory is my Lord. Surely I am only a man and a messenger." (17: 93)

4. Most books on the Prophet's life take up a historical approach; thus they present a history of the Prophet's life. I imagine that this work presents the Prophet's life from a different angle,

namely, his daily life practices. We are in need of both, and indeed we need to look at his blessed life from other angles. The breadth of Muhammad's life and his great achievements deserve all that and more.

5. The scenes that are presented did not all take place in one day. What happened in one day did not necessarily happen every day. However, their total sum gives us as close a picture of what took place in his day as possible.

6. As for the timing of events and practices, I may say that sometimes the reports clearly indicate the time of certain practices. In other cases, I relied on some indications to attach practices to their likely time. These indications vary in strength and clarity, and, as such, they must be carefully studied. I have endeavoured to place every story in its appropriate time, according to its context, the total sum of the reports mentioning it and comparison with similar cases. However, human effort is liable to error. All I say is that I have tried my best.

7. I endeavoured to choose authentic reports wherever possible. I may include reports and stories that have some weakness in their chains of transmission. These, however, are normally complements of what is given in authentic reports. I make sure not to include any such report when its text is clearly flawed. The fact is that taking the different reports and comparing them often indicates what is flawed or what is at variance with the authentic sum of the story. It may also strengthen a story that has been ruled as suspect because of some weakness in its chain of transmission. There may be a confirmation of the meaning given, or what the context requires.

8. When I relate a story, I do not commit myself to any particular one of its reports. I make up the most complete version based on the total sum of the reports. Hence, I have included an extensive bibliography, mostly of *hadith* sources. Together, these sources give the full version of every story or report mentioned in the book, although some stories may not be fully found in any single source.

9. Wherever possible, I try to give the exact wording of the Prophet's companions as they reported events, but I do not commit myself to that. I may adapt the wording so as to fit with other texts

and to give a more complete story. Where the Prophet is quoted, I give his exact words, making no change. However, I may choose from different reports, or add them together so as to provide the fullest version.

10. I am very grateful to everyone who reads this book and favours me with a comment that may correct a mistake or add a complement. Everyone needs advice. Whenever we acquire fresh knowledge we remember God's words: "You, [mankind], have been granted but little knowledge." (17: 85)

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Here is the city of palm dates and lively hearts; here lives his heart. It is his place, his city, his people. It is the city in which everything came alight when he arrived. Its people and its very nature loved him. Here is Mount Uhud with which he had a relation of mutual love. These narrow alleyways will recognize his footsteps.

Here will be his mosque and adjacent to it will be his small rooms.

But here in the mosque will also gather a great band of men, eager to follow him and do his bidding. With them he will have a pure relation of mutual love. He is always with them; but his special relation is with God..

We will look at Prophet Muhammad's management of his day, hour by hour, to gain an insight into the simplicity of his great life, the spontaneity of his serious life, the perfect balance between his activities and the fulfillment of complementary needs.

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A Study in the Prophet's Daily Programme



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